

VOICE OF BAKUR
PREPARATIONS FOR PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION
INCLUSIVE OF CHILDREN'S ORAL LITERATURE

Feridun BİRGÜL

English Translation
Justyna Szewczyk

DISA PUBLICATIONS

DIYARBAKIR INSTITUTE FOR POLITICAL AND SOCIAL RESEARCH
(DISA)

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**DIYARBAKIR SİYASAL VE SOSYAL
ARAŞTIRMALAR ENSTİTÜSÜ**

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INTRODUCTION

A society, which can freely use the language and culture of its land in education, raises conscious individuals who are at peace with themselves. However, the same society, if under pressure and oppression of the hegemon does not refer to its own values, but values of the oppressor, becomes alienated from its own land, history, culture and language raising individuals lacking self-confidence. Kurds, who possess rich language, culture, history and land, have been constantly prevented from growth by oppressive and colonialist states. Therefore, language and cultural values of Kurdish nation could be passed onto new generations only in a limited scope in the written form. Kurds managed to protect and preserve to this day their values in oral form through efforts of *dengbêjs* as storytellers by song in an ethereal and mesmerizing style, local storytellers and singers and that is how they created considerable repertoire of oral culture.

Apart from many researchers and writers studying Kurdish folklore, there are many studies of Kurdish folklore done by Kurds themselves.¹ After the November War,² Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, became the center of Kurdish studies. In 1931 a committee at Yerevan University was formed to investigate and archive Kurdish folklore. Under leadership of Karo Zakaryan, such Kurdish researchers as “Cerdoê Gêncî,” “Heciyê Cindî” and “Kasimê Celîl” participated in the research. The committee published in 1936 invaluable work containing Kurdish folkloric products such as songs, stories, proverbs.

Prominent orientalist, Vladimir Minorsky, said about Kurdish oral culture that: “Kurds are a wealthy nation. They have literature, tens of tales, stories, eposes and songs.” Vilchevsky claimed “super-abundance” of Kurdish literature and said “Kurdish oral literature is highly developed, but non-existent in written form.”³ According to Christian Allison⁴ Yazidi Kurds are an example of the original Kurdish folklore. One of the reasons is the fact that social and religious life is performed in Kurdish language. The existence of Yazidis is important in terms of Kurdish national identity acquisition. In Amed Gökçen’s view, while Yazidis were almost entirely confined within borders of the Ottoman Empire, nowadays due to migration they live in Iraq, Syria, Russia, Geor-

1 Aras, 2000, *Özgür Bakış Gazatesi*, p. 12.

2 1920, during Turkish-Armenian War [Translator’s note].

3 Nikitin, 2013, p. 432.

4 Kreyenbroek & Allison, 2008, p.63.

gia and Germany. Since 1877 Yazidis were exposed to the Ottoman Empire's as well as different states' policies and their political and military situation was prescribed according to those policies. Until the beginning of the 20th century most of the Yazidis were nomads. Oral literature from the pre-settlement period talks about heroes, war and love. Moreover, Yazidi community represents Kurdish prehistoric system of beliefs.

According to a common narrative about the Yazidis, they are critical for the policies geared towards Kurdish freedom. In this case Yazidis' settlement and roots in the region are important factors.⁵ Therefore studies of Yazidi oral culture play important role from the perspective of bringing into light richness of Kurdish folklore.

Basil Nikitin⁶ claims that "instruction in Kurdish taking place in schools in Kurdistan since 1914 is rather aimed at popularizing and spreading knowledge about Islam in madrasahs. These madrasah teach in Arabic. However, when Arabic is not understood, education is carried out in Kurdish. Subjects taught there are very different from Kurdish culture and history. Based on that education in Arabic is seen in Kurdish society as a necessity and at the same time knowledge of Arabic is presented to the society as an indicator of scholarly achievement." Here we can see that in the past assimilation was carried out by dominant powers through imposition of a religion. Nowadays, however, assimilation is carried out more under the banners of capitalism by means of Turkish, Farsi and Arabic.

Colonialist powers throughout history accomplished cultural and literary genocide in consequence of assimilation. Particularly in Northern Kurdistan this kind of state policy has not changed since the Ottoman Empire. Music and literature of Kurdistan filtered through colonialist lenses was used as a weapon against Kurdish society.⁷

Measures taken by the state in Northern Kurdistan in terms of media and education are insufficient in the view of Kurdish society. Kurdish language instruction in Northern Kurdistan takes place in private schools or as a selective course.⁸ Kurdish children are educated in Turkish and only in the 5th

5 Gökçen, 2014.

6 Nikitin, 2013: p. 433.

7 Yücel, Türk Sinemasında Kürtler, 2008.

8 Officially, based on "Living Languages and Dialects" two lesson hours a week are devoted to language instruction in 5th grade.

grade they are exposed to instruction in Kurdish. This state of affairs in the eyes of Kurdish community and with respect to meeting the requirements for the right to education is meaningless. Kurdish classes offered in state schools are limited to teaching the language in addition to the fact that curriculum is prescribed by the state. As a result, Kurdish children are deprived of an opportunity to become familiar with their own culture and history. Approximately 15 million Kurds live in Turkey.⁹ Therefore, use of Kurdish language in education from pre-school stage till university is a necessity for the Kurdish community. However, selective two lessons of Kurdish a week provided by the state do not satisfy natural rights of the community.

As far as the media are concerned in Turkey, there are TV channels broadcasting in Kurdish.¹⁰ Language of the broadcast is the only aspect that differentiates them from other Turkish channels. TRT 6, which is a public TV channel, is no different from others in terms of broadcast and content. By means of this channel and similar ones, official manipulative narrative is reinforced. It is particularly visible in case of children's programs. Kurdish children are under influence of cartoon characters, heroes and protagonists of programs shown on these channels. Children identify with these characters and use them in their daily lives, social relations and play time. In this case official ideology replaces Kurdish values. As a result Kurds who have internalized another culture and departed from their own history and culture are created and those are the ones accepted by the official ideology.¹¹

A child starts to learn how to speak and listen in the family. Child's language develops naturally in its environment at its own pace.¹² According to Jean Piaget's language development stages a child possess strong language structure prior to education. Until age of 3-4 a child generates chattering. After this age, due to schooling, a child meets more people and socializes developing lexis and fluency. A child until school age spends time at home and speaks its mother tongue. Pre-school education is important for the development of the mother tongue. During this period of education oral materials are primary tool used for the development of the language.¹³

9 According to CIA nearly 15 million Kurds live in Turkey but the numbers might be higher. See: Washington, 2013.

10 Both private and state-funded.

11 Those who fall far from existing social order of Kurdishness are assimilated Kurds.

12 Ass. Prof. Dr. Ali GÖÇER, 2010.

13 Demir, 2011, p.39-48.

Jacqueline Rose in her book “The Case of Peter Pan” states about children’s literature the following: “Children’s literature is impossible. Because this kind of literature is created by adults for children and is artificial.” In this context, literature created by adults for children is called children’s literature.¹⁴ Some claim that “there is no separate literature for children because one may find adults who read with pleasure children’s literature.” İnci Enginün believes that “(...) there is no need to create separate literature for children because if a child is presented with a literary text suitable for its mental capacity, it will enjoy that text.”¹⁵

Discussions pertaining to the question whether children’s literature exists continue. On the other hand, there are materials prepared for the children and a child is capable of comprehending and embracing them with its own mind. Capability of understanding these materials and tools depends on the manner they are presented to the child. Flow, vocabulary, dialogue, pictures and length of the subject are among criteria to be considered when preparing and presenting materials to the children. Thus, book pictures, folk songs, tales, anecdotes, stories, eposes, theatre plays, novels, poetry, lullabies, riddles,¹⁶ nursery rhymes, proverbs, idioms, chants, epigrams, autumn songs and other forms must be prepared and designed according to children’s age and developmental stage.¹⁷

This study is based on fieldwork. In the course of the research five regions of Northern Kurdistan were visited in seventy eight days.¹⁸ 854 people were interviewed in fourteen counties and thirty two districts, two towns and seventy six villages.

Although a body of folklore research concerning Northern Kurdistan exists, this study differs in scope and aim. This research, conducted between late June and mid-September 2014, also aimed at recording and archiving Kurdish folklore in Northern Kurdistan. The overall objective of this broad study is to

14 Adults, based on their own experience, produce literary forms for children.

15 Seyit Battal Uğurlu, 2010.

16 In some regions for riddle term *tıştonek* is also used.

17 Ayvaci & Devecioğlu, 2013.

18 Serhed; Kars, Kağızman, Pazarcık, Dığor, Iğdır, Tuzluca, Ağrı, Doğubayazıt, Diyadin, Patnos, Van, Muradiye, Çaldıran, Erciş, Muş, Varto, Bulanık, Bitlis, Adilcevaz, Ahlat, Hizan, Tatvan, Botan; Nusaybin, Mardin, Midyat, Cizre, Silopi, Şırnak, Siirt, Pervari, Herekol, Behdınan; Hakkari, Beytüşşebab, Uludere, Çukurca, Yüksekova, Şemdinli, Başkale, Gürpınar, Faraşın, Dersim-Bingöl; Bingöl, Solhan, Tunceli, Ovacık, Diyarbakır-Batman; Batman, Gercüş, Dargeçit, Siirt, Ergani.

adopt collected folkloric products for the use in pre-school education.

We aimed to revise and present every story preserving features peculiar to its place of origin. Along with the stories, riddles, epigrams, nursery rhymes, games and other literary products are to be parts of the same educational set. Once materials for pre-school education are ready it will be time to develop program for older children.¹⁹ Furthermore, an anthology comprising of all the collected works is to be prepared. By doing so, works will be preserved in two forms: in the dialect of the recording and in written form in Zaza and Kurmanji Kurdish. At the later stage such publication will be presented to educational institutions and children.

¹⁹ Aged 7-11.

A. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

This study has been conducted in five regions of the Northern Kurdistan.²⁰ Vast territorial scope of the research was dictated by the purpose and peculiarity of the study. Our goal was to reach nearly all examples of Kurdish folklore in Northern Kurdistan. To achieve this goal we have embarked on a more than 17000 km long journey across dozens of counties and villages. As a result we have documented oral literature in every region of Northern Kurdistan. We have basically identified variations of different forms of oral literature since the same tales, nursery rhymes and lullabies are told differently in various regions.

Thorough examination of the collected folkloric materials was necessary. Fieldwork was completed in a shorter period of time than the examination of the artifacts. Taking into consideration our program and preparations, the study was going to be completed within three months. We had completed our fieldwork as planned and returned to ponder over collected materials and to transcribe them into a written form. Although our study was short it was rather productive. According to initial projections of the study, oral literary products and other findings collected during fieldwork have gone beyond our expectations. At the beginning of the study we planned to collect around sixty tales in the course of the field research. However, as a result of the field study we managed to record over two hundred tales in addition to hundreds more other works.

Above we have mentioned richness of Kurdish culture in which, we may say, this study is anchored. The fact that in three months we managed to archive hundreds of literary products demonstrates richness of Kurdish oral literature. We hope that this study will be conducive to more extensive research of various institutions, organizations, institutes, academia and universities working in the field of language and culture. Scientific and academic institutions are responsible for the collection and classification of Kurdish oral culture which is a painstaking process. From this perspective our study is a step forward with regard to children's oral literature in Northern Kurdistan.

Research was conducted in the summer of 2014. The route was established according to climate conditions and topography of Northern Kurdistan. Our study started in Serhed and continued in Behdinan region. Later we moved respectively to Botan, Dersim-Bingöl and concluded our study in Diyarbakır. Serhed region encompassed the greatest territory and was the place where

20 Serhed, Dersim-Bingöl, Behdinan, Botan and Diyarbakır.

we met most of the *dengbêjs*. Therefore, study was the most time consuming in this region. Moreover, majority of works were also collected in Serhed. Der-sim-Bingöl is the region where we recorded the least oral literary products. The main reason behind such state of affairs is the effect of assimilation which resulted in forgetting of the oral literature in mother tongue.

The study was documented by means of audio and video recordings as well as occasionally written records. Most of the interviews were carried out with elderly women and men. Depending on the specific features of the region and circumstances also children²¹ were interviewed along with young women and men as well as Syriacs and Yazidis. Majority of Syriacs have forgotten oral literary products. Due to displacement in the past, Yazidi people were left with nobody to pass on the oral tradition.

Apart from the cities, the study was carried out mostly in remote villages. Due to the negative effect of urbanization on language transmission rural areas were chosen in order to reach genuine sources. Prior to the interviews, contact was established with individuals in the area of our fieldwork who knew addresses of the storytellers. In terms of time and finding the right addresses these contacts turned out invaluable and made our work effective. In many places where we could not establish such contacts our work was difficult.

B. LANGUAGE USED IN THE INTERVIEWS

Interviews are recorded in the languages, dialects and accents used in the region. Most of the recordings are in Kurmanji and Zaza dialects while in the areas inhabited by Syriacs in the Syriac language. Nobody was found to record the audio materials of the Armenians.

Sometimes Turkish would become common language during the interviews. This most frequently happened in areas where Zaza dialect is spoken. In other regions the predominance of Turkish was also visible and Kurdish was forgotten. There, interviews were carried out in Turkish. In some regions even if we initiated the interview in Kurdish, interviewees at the beginning and at the end of the conversations would switch to Turkish. Kurdish population departed from its language because of prohibition of the Kurdish language and obligatory usage of Turkish language²². It was not possible to speak Kurd-

²¹ 7-15 year olds.

²² Prohibition of other languages than Turkish, which particularly targeted Kurdish language, was imposed in the aftermath of the 12th September 1980 military coup d'état. There are many articles of the 1982 Constitution that specifically refer to the ban:

ish neither in social nor in family life. As a result, Kurdish people began to disuse Kurdish despite awareness about the importance of the language. This situation reached a point where Kurdish people would be ashamed to talk in their mother tongue in the presence of strangers.²³ In some cases despite knowledge of Kurdish some choose to communicate in Turkish. In the course of the research we have come to realize that this is widespread phenomenon in Kurdish community.

Oral literature was not our only subject of our interviews. Although listening and documenting oral literary products were the main aims of our field-work, oftentimes we were forced to adjust to the circumstances in the field. The fact that city of Diyarbakır is considered to be the capital or the center place for the Kurds was enough to steer us off the main topic. Although we would explain the character of the study and introduce ourselves as researchers from Diyarbakır, political language oftentimes prevailed and made it difficult for us to get to our agenda easily.

We went through three stages during the interviews in order to listen and record oral literary works. At first, to gain trust, we had to introduce ourselves well. We would make clear who we are, where we came from and why came there. Secondly, we would inform the interviewees about works we wanted to record. Oral literary works have not been retold by the people for years and in consequence tales, lullabies and other literary products have become forgotten. During the interviews it was necessary to remind oral literary products to the person who was to be the source themselves. In each place of the fieldwork oral literary works were named differently. With regard to naming, however, we had done a lot of preparations prior to going to the field, which helped us a lot in our work. The third stage was the recording of the literary

"No language prohibited by law may be used in the expression and dissemination of thought. Any written or printed documents, phonograph records, magnetic or video tapes, and other means of expression used in contravention of this provision shall be seized by a duly issued decision of judge or, in cases where delay is deemed prejudicial, by the competent authority designated by law.(Art. 26, Par. 3-4)" "Publication may not be made in any language prohibited by law. (Art.28, Par.2)" "No language other than Turkish may be taught as mother tongue to Turkish citizens at any institutions of training or education. (Art.42, Par.9)" National Security Council passed Law No. 2932 titled "The Law Concerning Publications and Broadcasts in Languages Other Than Turkish" in November 1983 which deemed Kurdish a banned language. It declared that "The mother tongue of all Turkish citizens is Turkish" and forbade the use of "any language other than Turkish" as a mother tongue in expression of thoughts or in publications. See: Çağlayan 2014.

23 In presence of Kurdish speaking people who come from different region/city/town and Turkish speaking people who come from another region/city/town.

products. We needed the source (person) and the people around us to be silent during the recording. Even if we had warned the people around the storyteller (source person), telephone rings and conversations of the other villagers were interrupting the recordings.

C. DIFFICULTIES

Fieldwork is a very painstaking process. In this study we were faced with difficulties peculiar to field research in Kurdistan. Rather than discourage us, these difficulties helped us face some facts. What particularly got our attention were the doubts about us during the interviews. We felt the suspicion against us quite often. This included even people who were helping us in the fieldwork. It became apparent that the state is responsible for this situation.

We can say that in all the regions during our research people presented a certain kind of attitude. People whom we tried to interview did not trust us, but besides that they would sometimes show no interest, even shut the doors in our faces, or they would just leave us without a word. There were also times that they would question us, which made us uncomfortable.

We could understand the reasons underlying this distance so we did not find it odd. We experienced these kinds of situations mostly in mountainous villages which were exposed to a lot of cruelty at the hands of Special Forces and Turkey sponsored counter-guerrilla forces in the 90s. Thousands of people were subjected to oppression or lost their lives when villages were burnt down, their sons and daughters kidnapped and killed. Special Forces and MIT²⁴ members used to drive in civilian cars. There were some Kurdish speaking officers among them as well.²⁵ They would gather information about properties, houses and addresses of the villagers. The vehicle that we were driving was unfamiliar, we were strangers and we were going to the places not many people usually visit. As a result of all these, villagers were suspicious about us.

We recorded 3-4 hours of footage in the region of Serhed, near Doğubeyazıt, in a village²⁶ near Ararat and when it was the time to leave I told the house owner:

24 National Intelligence Organization [Translator's note].

25 Or Kurdish people.

26 It is called "Glidax-Giridax (Mt. Ağrı)" in the region of Ağrı-Iğdır.

-Uncle, you still don't trust us, do you?

The owner of house nodded and told me:

-No, dear. Good luck!

We encountered many frustrating incidents like this one. We realized we had to first earn the trust of the people and only then we should have encouraged them to tell their stories.

During our research process we encountered another phenomenon: "Women Under Oath." Women known as *dengbêj* (folk poet/voice teller), *chirokbêj* (tale teller) and *qewlerkbêj* (epigram teller) as a result of some past events made an oath not to sing songs and poems or tell stories. Determined to stand by their decisions they did not say a single word of folkloric value. Yes, we met these women, and we tried to hear voices of their bitter lives. Some of them, in order not to disappoint us, would briefly tell what they had been through, but they did not dare to repeat what they had said. Some lost their daughters and sons, some lost their sisters and brothers, and some lost their husbands. Those who lost their siblings and children were the most sorrowful ones. Those women, who used to *bedengbej*, expressed their pain by singing requiems all the time. We met many heartbroken mothers in Digor, Dagpınar and Diyadin of Serhed region; in Şemdinli, Uludere, Çukurca of Behdınan region; in Dersim region. They shared with us their heart breaking requiems and tandoori bread.

There was a woman called Xace in Pazarcık²⁷ who wanted to be addressed as "Mother Xace." According to the word of mouth in the region, she used to be a famous *dengbej*. After the death of her brother she took the pledge not to sing anymore and only lament for her deceased brother. At the same time Mother Xace was a mother of guerilla fighter. She was praying for the guerillas during our interview. She begged the God to give the fighters power and strength. After the interview Mother Xace gave us fresh tandoori bread and cheese.

"I liked you a lot, I will tell a few things, you are like my children," she said.

Then she said with her thin voice:

*"Oh my brother, oh my brother
Oh my brother, my dear*

²⁷ A town in the province of Kars, located between Kars city center and Digor.

*I wish your fingers
had made me blind.
Oh, poor me, what should I do?
I am left dumbstruck without my brother...."*

She went on and she could not hold back herself and started crying.

Daily life in Northern Kurdistan is shaped by political events. Developments in four parts of Kurdistan are closely followed by the Kurdish people and are constitutive elements of every sphere of their lives.

While we were getting ready to start our research in Uludere county of Şırnak province, we got the news about ISIS attack on Maxmur Camp.²⁸ Many people were forced to leave the camp and fights continued until noon. Upon hearing this news people of Uludere and neighboring villages got together to condemn ISIS. Had we wanted, we would not have found anybody to interview. No one wanted to meet us. That day in Uludere we could not do our work.

While we were in Dersim region, events in Rojava²⁹ were on the agenda. Many people, in particular mothers in Dersim, were critical of the situation in Rojava. Complaints of a mother from Dersim were as follows:

*Our children fight day and night for our motherland!
Why do you leave them on their own?!
Why didn't you go to fight those who tyrannize your brothers?!
Our daughters and sons! Our youth, our hopes, our martyrs!
..... (The woman is crying)*

No matter how much her words saddened us, we had to continue our research.

Efforts of the Turkish state to eradicate Kurdish culture have been severely traumatic for the Kurdish people. The trauma is particularly visible in the first two generations. The first generation³⁰ was exposed to deadly oppression and humiliation. This generation sees itself as between memories of the past and current events. Members of this generation upon our request to talk to us about oral literature would say:

What you gonna do with these? They are worthless and good for nothing, now

28 Refugee camp in Northern Iraq [Translator's note].

29 Western Kurdistan within territory of Syria.

30 Aged 50-70.

there's TV. Once we got used to TV we forgot those kinds of things. Anyways nobody listens. We used to say those things a lot, but now we don't remember well.³¹

The second generation³² was educated solely in the Turkish language and instead of their own culture and history, is more familiar with those of the Turkish Republic.³³ Members of this generation are likely to be more aware of their culture and to demand it since they are in a relatively better position. We had an opportunity to meet many individuals from this generation, however, they could be of no help to us with regard to oral literature due to lack of knowledge.

Our observations from the field with regard to the use of Kurdish have been thoroughly investigated by Handan Çağlayan in her study "Same Home, Different Languages" published in 2014 by DISA. In her book she examines language change in three-generational families living together.³⁴

We have already said that we conducted fieldwork mostly in remote villages of rather mountainous regions.³⁵ It was a challenge to reach or leave a village and at times we were in danger of a car accident. Since it was the summer in many places people left for highlands and so we also were forced to follow them to reach storytellers. There were also moments that we could not continue our journey by car. Then, in order to carry on our research, we had to walk or ride horses or donkeys to reach our interviewees. Time of our stay at a given location depended on whether we found any examples of oral literature. To document oral literary products sometimes we would stay for two or three days in the highlands, villages or remote households. In some places we had problems with access to electricity thus experienced technical problems due to low batteries of our recording equipment. In such situations we took notes or went to the city to solve technical problems.

Some of the people who were our sources of oral literature were bothered by the recording devices or did not allow us to turn them on or were overexcited during the recording: they were unable to utter a word or could not repeat their words. It happened usually in front of the camera. We did not record anything unless we were given permission by the interviewee or we turned on the camera at the very end. We usually got negative answer to our request

31 Mehmet Kaya, village of Perkan, Digor. Similar reaction was encountered throughout the study in other places.

32 Aged 20-30.

33 Ekim Gençliği Dergisi, 2013.

34 For more see: Çağlayan, 2014, p. 64-63.

35 Serhed, Behdinan, Botan and Dersim-Bingöl.

for video recording but oftentimes we were also not allowed to record audio. From the religion's point of view audio recording is a sin and therefore we were not permitted to do so. Unfortunately, in such places it was impossible to record oral literary products.

In some regions we could not reach women storytellers. Since women are the most knowledgeable about lamentations we needed to find some women to record this oral literary form. Sometimes men would tell us that "women don't know" or "they won't tell" etc. and make the decision for the women or they would not allow us to meet women and instead spoke on their behalf. Regardless of women friends' participation in the process of interviewing and recording, we did encounter such negative attitudes.

D. FRAMEWORK OF THE REPORT

This report consists of three main parts. Chapter 1 deals with the regions of the study and their peculiarities. Here, also notes from the fieldwork are included. Chapter 2 focuses on the oral literature and children's oral literature in Northern Kurdistan and presents their examples and analysis. Chapter 3 i.e. "Instead of a conclusion" puts forward recommendations with regard to pre-school education and genres of oral literature in Kurdistan.

Until now the world children's literature is based on works written by adults. In this report we focus on oral children's literature. It is important that children living in Kurdistan can benefit from richness of Kurdish culture and oral literature addressed to them. While examining oral literary products, at points, we refer to psychoanalytical approach. In addition, cultural assimilation in disguise of a change is also exemplified and explained in the following chapters.

E. REPRESENTATIVENESS OF THE REPORT

This report is the first comprehensive study carried out by civil society organizations³⁶ in terms of representation of Northern Kurdistan. Northern Kurdistan is diverse in terms of peoples, languages, dialects and accents, cultural values, climate and topographical features. Due to rich diversity we presented with five geographical regions. This study was carried in all of these five regions, although not in every town and city. Fieldwork was conducted in pre-selected places based on their relevance to the study. We aimed to evalu-

³⁶ In cooperation with Diyarbakır Institute for Political and Social Research (DiSA) and Diyarbakır Kurdish Institute.

ate the situation and usage of oral literature in Northern Kurdistan.

Hundreds of oral literary genres have been recorded and transcribed during this study. They create rich written resources for all inhabitants of Kurdistan. Children and Kurdish families will benefit from classification of oral literary genres. These works will be used as written and visual materials in Kurdish education. The purpose of these educational materials is to protect cultural peculiarity of the regions.

CHAPTER 1

A. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REGION

Kurdistan: Terminology

Kurdistan is neither a name of a state with clearly defined borders nor it is a name of an independent state.³⁷ As the map below demonstrates, Kurdistan is a region divided into four parts belonging to Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. A writer and sociologist, İsmail Beşikçi, writes extensively about division of Kurdish lands.³⁸ When Kurdish lands had been divided Kurds remained scattered within borders of these four states. Kurds who live in the vicinity of the border use such terms as “over the border” or “under the border.”³⁹ Borderlines sometimes divide a city, a village, or a farm or a pasture. People who live on both sides of the border know each other and are related. They maintain relations either via phone or illegally crossing the border. In Silopi, Cizre, Nusaybin, Şemdinli, Uludere and many other villages visited within the scope of this study we have observed such relations.

The term “Kurdistan” is used by Kurdish people as if it was a name of a state. Northern Kurdistan falls within borders of Turkey, Southern Kurdistan within borders of Iraq, Western of Syria and Eastern of Iran. The map below shows Kurdistan and countries it is divided among.

37 Nikitin, 2013, p.56.

38 Without a doubt imperialist division of Kurdistan is the work of colonial states. Sykes-Picot agreement signed in 1915 by Great Britain, France and Russia aimed at division of Kurdistan. Already in that period there existed plans to divide Kurdistan. See: Beşikçi 1991.

39 Both terms are in use in the regions where we have conducted our field research. The term “over the border” refers to Kurds from the region of Nusaybin and Cizre of Northern Kurdistan while the term “under the border” is used in reference to Kurds from Western Kurdistan. Border line referred to in both terms is the one between Turkey and Syria. Both terms take their names from the rail route that runs between the two countries and marks their borders.



Graphic 1: Map of Kurdistan.⁴⁰

Each region of Kurdistan is named according to its social, historical and geographical features. History, social events, high and non-penetrable mountains play also a role in the naming and division into regions. In fact limits of these regions run across borders and encompass vast areas.⁴¹ Borders established by different states in the region of Kurdistan make no sense for the society from the perspective of their ideas and awareness. Moreover, existence of the borders forms a great division and obstacle for Kurds inhabiting these lands. Kurds may visit one another only through official procedures or otherwise they are at risk of being killed (when crossing state borders without official permission).

Cultural transmission between regions maintains vitality along with preservation of settled lifestyle. On the other hand, inter-regional relations depend on geographical and climatic factors. Social relations between Serhed and Behdinan, Behdinan and Dersim, Serhed and Diyarbakır, Behdinan and

⁴⁰ See: Kurdish Institute of Paris, 1993.

⁴¹ Behdinan region includes not only Hakkari, but also many cities in Southern Kurdistan while Botan region includes many cities in Western Kurdistan.

Diyarbakır have developed under the influence of climate and topographical features. Each region possesses peculiar characteristics. Primary factor shaping character of a region is climate and secondly geographical features related to it. Additionally, there are also social events and economic situation that influence these regions. Differences between regions are not significant. The easiest way to differentiate people from different regions is by their accent and dialect. In the course of a conversation one can determine origin of the interlocutor by these features of speech. Each region has its own dialect. A person who knows Kurdish well can understand all dialects of Northern Kurdistan and communicate with the people.

1. Serhed Region

In comparison with other regions, Serhed region encompasses the largest territory. Among the people it is known to be home to borders, mountains, snow, highlands and *dengbêjs*.⁴² Serhed region starts in the city of Bingöl and stretches until Kars covering many cities and sub-regions.⁴³ Our research was not carried out in all the cities of the region. Cities visited during the study include: Kars, Kağızman, Pazarcık, Dığor, Iğdır, Tuzluca, Ağrı, Doğubayazıt, Diyadin, Patnos, Van, Muradiye, Çaldıran, Erciş, Muş, Varto, Bulanık, Bitlis, Adilcevaz, Ahlat, Hizan and Tatvan. Comparing with the other regions, most of the recorded oral literary genres originate from Serhed region. By all means, in every city's and village's neighborhood and fireplace we encountered a *dengbêj*. Climate features and social events directly influence oral literature. Impact of social and political events on songs and tales is very strong.⁴⁴ Generally speaking, comprehension in mother tongue in this region is rather very limited and compared to other regions effects of assimilation are significant. There is little awareness as to the protection of the language, culture and history. Folkloric richness of the region is preserved, however this richness is endangered by subsequent waves of assimilation.

On the walls of many cities in the Serhed region we have seen pictures of Shahmaran.⁴⁵ Even though Shahmaran is known and loved in other regions

42 Gültekin 2013.

43 It also encompasses territories going beyond borders of Turkey.

44 Ulugana 2012.

45 Shahmaran is a mythological legend told in oral literature of Kurdistan. Shahmaran is half-woman and half-snake. She occupies prominent place among women of the Serhed region. Since the legend talks about high regions, plateaus and cold springs it is believed to have originated in the Serhed region.

of Kurdistan, it has a special meaning for women in the Serhed region. Pillow embroideries, clothes covering chests and other things are decorated by women with the image of Shahmaran. Women in Serhed use the image of Shahmaran and give importance to it in their lives and arts as it is an integral part of womanhood. See Photo 2 taken during fieldwork for the board depicting Shahmaran found in a village in Serhed.

In comparison with other regions, Serhed is a poorer region. According to our observations and investigation, the region was exposed to assimilationist policies under state's control in the aftermath of "Ararat Rebellion⁴⁶" and "Zilan Massacre."⁴⁷ Result of these policies is clearly observable especially in the rebellious regions.



Graphic 2: A picture representing Shahmaran on the wall in one of the houses in the village of Hallaç, Doğubayazıt Ağrı, Serhed (July 2014).

2. Behdinan Region

Behdinan, or Hakkari, region consists of Hakkari, Betüşşebap, Uludere, Çukurca, Yüksekova, Şemdinli, Başkale, Gürpınar and Faraşın. Moreover, many re-

⁴⁶ The rebellion started in 1926 and ended in 1930. For more see: Karaca 2013, "İhsan Nuri Paşa'nın Anıları", 1984.

⁴⁷ July 13th 1930 more than 15 thousand Kurds were massacred in Erciş. See: Ulugana, 2012.

gions in the South, West and East Kurdistan fall within boundaries of that region, where the most commonly spoken dialect is Sorani.⁴⁸ From geographical perspective Behdinan is a remote region hardly reachable by people or any external forces. As a result, identity, language and culture have been preserved. Oral literature, with its vivid language, is present in daily life. In terms of rich variety of forms of oral literature, this region falls only short of Serhed.

Both in history and recently Behdinan witnessed numerous fights and attacks. *Mir Bedirhanlar* and other eposes recorded in the region, bear witness to historical, political and social events. Regardless of the impact of the past events on the oral literature, contemporary events continue to shape it and can be found reflected in oral literature. An example from Çukurca county, Hakkari, illustrates the situation:

*Go you foal, gosh, you're a fool,
Frail foal, gosh, you're a fool,
Badgering yourself for crumbs,
Don't you know this world?*

*Go you foal, gosh, you're a fool,
Frail foal, gosh, you're a fool,
Crawling after rebellion,
One more step and your head'll fall.*

*Dinner time for the folk, The valley was dark,
Foals and soldiers goin' down
Guerrilla opened fire.
Look at your food of corpses and carcasses,
From dark sky Skorsky⁴⁹ came down,
Picked up corpses and carcasses.⁵⁰*

These lines are repeated fast like a chant and aim at criticism. This particular chant criticizes village guards.⁵¹ It refers to the war between village guards,

48 Joyce Blau, Philip Kreyenbroek, Christine Allison, 2003.

49 Military aircraft [Translator's note].

50 Heard from İsmail Durdu in Çukurca county.

51 Turkish state in order to establish general security and for its protection created paramilitary organizations by arming civilians. These formations exist to this day. In the Ottoman Empire this kind of formations were called the Hamidiye corps and consisted mainly of Kurdish clans. They were armed against Armenians and other enemies of the Ottoman Empire. During the Republican period paramilitary organization consisting of

guerrillas and the military. In consequence of the war, thousands of villages in Northern Kurdistan were demolished, torched and forcefully evicted.⁵² In the course of our study we came across dozens of demolished villages. Between Çukurca and Hakkari there are only three villages left. Since all the villages in Çukurca were demolished villagers migrated to cities or other regions.

On account of region's remote and non-penetrable location, impact of cultural assimilation and modernity is less visible. Inhabitants of this region sustained natural and specific organization of Kurdish community. In daily life women are empowered and play an active role. In Behdinan women's active participation is clearly visible both in political and cultural sphere as well as domestic sphere. In terms of arts and management women are at the fore front. In Şemdinli, Uludere, Yüksekova and other cities of Behdinan region, men and women occupy the same space in diners and can share meals. There is no difference between them. In such places as Serhed, Diyarbakır, Batman, especially in diners, one can find "family section" where no males are allowed to enter except family members. This illustrates the impact of religion. Generally underlying cause are the differences in religious practices, information and worldview. In the religious context men and women must not occupy the same space and shall stay away from each other in order not to sin. Despite adoption of the same religion in Behdinan region, one does not see the same separation.

3. Botan Region

Botan region is the oldest and the richest one in Northern Kurdistan in terms of Kurdish culture. It does not have borderlines delineated by colonialist states and does not consist only of lands in Northern Kurdistan. There are many cities in Botan region including in Northern Kurdistan Nusaybin, Midyat, Cizre, İdil, Silopi, Şırnak, Siirt, Pervari, Herekol; Derik and Qamishli in Western Kurdistan, Zaho in Southern Kurdistan. The city of Cizra Botan (Cizre) is seen as the region's capital.⁵³ In comparison with other cities this one is more developed in political and cultural sense. After Behdinan, Botan is the region where mother tongue is most commonly spoken in daily life. While there are observable varieties of accents in different parts, Botan accent is the most

Kurdish villagers known as "Temporary Village Guards" was set up in response to PKK insurgency.

⁵² See: IHD, 2010.

⁵³ See: Reş 2013.

widespread. Since mother tongue has been preserved as a language of social life, oral literature has been preserved as well. Each inhabitant of Botan remembers at least one tale, riddle or another oral literary form.

In Cizira Botan women's mourning took our attention. Although sheikhs and mullahs are known to have authority to influence women's garments, in this case historical influence is clearly visible. According to the public in Cizira Botan, *Mam and Zin*⁵⁴ is the reason why women wear black.⁵⁵ The people of the region are in mourning for Mam and Zin's unfulfilled wishes so they dress in black and cover their heads with white cloth. Mam and Zin phenomenon greatly influenced the region. Black was worn for Mam and Zin for a long time and turned into a way of dressing among women in Cizira Botan.

4. Diyarbakır Region

In Diyarbakır region, main cities were selected to conduct the study: Diyarbakır, Batman, Gercüş, Dargeçit, Silvan and Ergani. In this region use of Kurdish is rather limited. In city centers mostly elderly men and women speak Kurdish. In younger age groups use of Kurdish is less common. In villages, however, comparing to cities, Kurdish is more widespread.

With regard to politics and social situation, in comparison with other regions, Diyarbakır exhibits relatively greater development. In Northern Kurdistan, Diyarbakır is seen as the center for Kurdish Political Movement.⁵⁶ It is also cultural center for Kurds in Northern Kurdistan. During our field research villagers and other cities' dwellers would welcome us by saying: "You're coming from our capital." Diyarbakır is seen as the capital of Western, Eastern and Southern Kurdistan.

5. Dersim Region

In Dersim mother tongue is least frequently spoken comparing to other regions. We have observed that historical events play a role in development and shape of oral literature also of this region. "Dersim Massacre"⁵⁷ directly influ-

54 A Kurdish classic love story written in the 17th century. Mam and Zim symbolize Kurds who like lovers in the story are separated [Translator's note].

55 See: Ehmedê Xanî 2000.

56 See: Çakır 2014.

57 After demolishing the battlefield in Kurdistan military operations were carried out and special governors and inspectors were sent to Dersim. Young girls were taken from families and either married off or forced to work as servants. Those girls were brought up as Turks. Population of Dersim decreased from 130 thousand to 50 thousand.

enced and shaped oral literature of Dersim. Most of oral literature recorded in Dersim bears visible traces of the past events.

Use of Kurdish language in Dersim declines proportionally to age i.e. the younger generation the less Kurdish it speaks. As a result, with the decline in the elderly population so does the interest in oral literature wither. Children on the streets of Dersim and in the villages speak among themselves Turkish and are oblivious of Kurdish language, culture or history. Many adults in daily life communicate with children in Turkish⁵⁸ and those aged 60-70 speak among themselves in Kurdish since they do not know Turkish.

In our interviews we could see that past events continue to influence Dersim. Due to events described in the stories we asked about during interviews, our interviewees could not hold back their tears while talking to us. We could feel enormous cruelty and oppression people of the region have been through and pain it has left.

Between 50 and 60 thousand of people were murdered. There is a need to carry further research on the effect of the "Tunceli Law" on the Kurdish people. The main goal of the law was to eradicate Kurdish and Kurdistan identity. This policy was implemented after the genocide to raise people of Dersim as Kemalists. For more see: Beşikçi 1990.

- 58 In a research on Intergenerational Language Change in a sample from Diyarbakır the need to learn Turkish for the sake of communicating with grandchildren is described as follows:

"I talk to them in Kurdish, they don't know even how to answer. They just run away." (Kibar, first generation). The most important topic of conversations for the first generation is their love of their grandchildren. For them "if child is like a walnut shell, grandchild is the walnut kernel." I not only heard of but also witnessed this love in my conversations with three generational families. However, this language barrier stood in the way of a satisfying dialogue and sharing between grandchildren and grandparents. They even spoke of grandchildren getting bored when staying too long with their grandparents. The source of this problem was lack of common language, lack of understanding. For more see: Çağlayan, 2014, p. 77.



Graphic 3. Gedik Anne⁵⁹ (99, Dersim, city center, August 2014).

In our conversation with Gedik Anne in the city center of Dersim, she wanted to address the prime minister of Turkey and described the fear still continuing since Dersim events:

-This state murdered us, decreased numbers, wiped out!

(silence)

-We told you that.

-Perhaps our voice will reach Erdoğan.⁶⁰

(Gedik Anne is laughing and we laugh with her).

We were both amused and saddened by Gedik Anne's words. It was obvious in the interview that people of Dersim still carry burden of the genocide.

B. NOTES FROM THE FIELDWORK

In the course of the research both us and the people we worked with developed different feelings and understanding. Regional features, social life, local events and circumstances contributed to this study.

59 Lit. "anne" means in Turkish "mother." Here it is used as a title to show respect [Translator's note].

60 Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Prime Minister of Turkey 2003-2014; President 2014-present [Translator's note].

1. Change of the village names

Names of the villages, towns and cities in the entire region of Northern Kurdistan were changed by the Turkish state⁶¹ On the other hand, none of the villages is known by its Turkish name or the people do not use Turkish names. Through repression the state only managed to instill these names in official institutions. In one of the state institutions we have encountered a puzzling situation related to this subject. In Behdinan, around Başkale, there is a police station at the top of a mountain. We wanted to climb that mountain to get a better view of the Behdinan mountain range. With the permission of the officer in charge we took photos from the garden and then drank a cup of tea with him. In his office I noticed a big map on the wall and approached it to have a closer look. It was a map of the region with all old (Kurdish) names of the villages and towns. The state has banned Kurds from using these names, but they still use them to their own advantage.

In every village visited for the purpose of this study we could see the results of the ban on the old names. When we travelled from cities to villages and asked about a place by its Turkish⁶² name we could not find anyone to show us the way, only when we asked by its Kurdish name we could get answers. In the villages only headmen knew Turkish name of their village and names of the villages in the vicinity. Villagers and the headman knew their own village's and region's all villages' names in Kurdish.

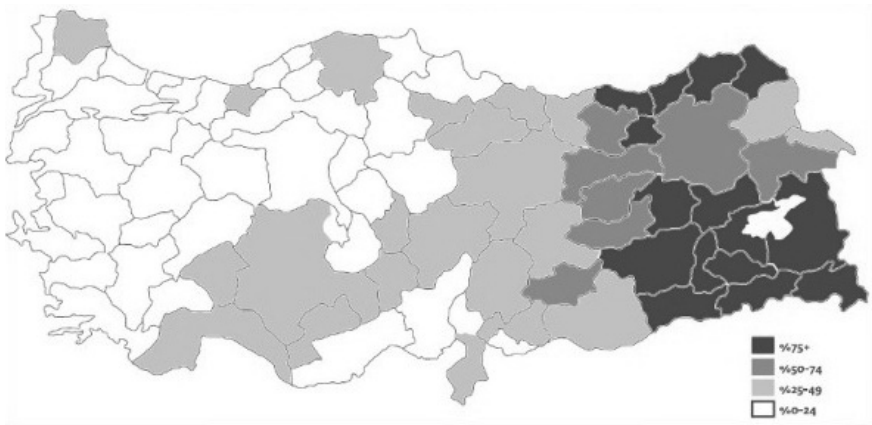
When we asked people about names of the villages we would be given two kinds of answers. They would ask names of the village in both languages or they would ask: "Is it in Turkish or in Kurdish?" In Civani village, Tuzulca county of Iğdır when we asked our interviewees about their addresses and information about their village they replied: "By Kurdish name or by Turkish?" Due to this kind of confusion we started taking notes in both languages and moved on.

There were many various Turkification policies implemented against all peoples living in Turkey. Changing names is an example of such policies. In the last chapter of a study "Change of Village Names in Turkey"⁶³ we can clearly see the scope of these changes.

61 Since the establishment of the Turkish Republic 12 thousand names of villages were changed (Tunçel, 2000). In total 41 thousand names were changed.

62 I.e. names written on official maps or information boards.

63 Hayali Coğrafyalar: Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türkiye'de Değiştirilen Yer Adları (Nişanyan, 2011).

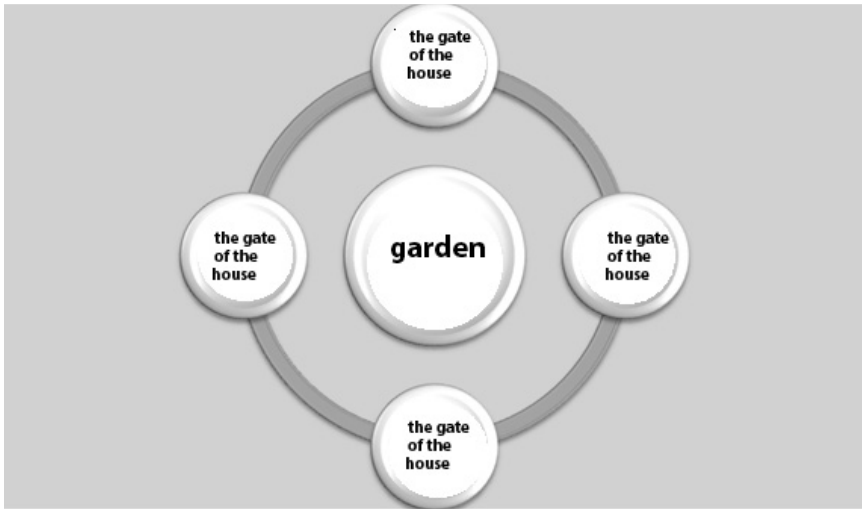


Graphic 4. Density of name changes in Turkey (Nişanyan, 2011, p. 52).

2. Cultural transmission

In Gola Bozo village in Gürpınar county in Van province of Behdinan, we were hosted by an elderly man named Kalê Şinoyi. He used to be a writer and in 2000s his writings were published in a paper called “Azadiya Welat.” Kalê Şinoyi is eighty years old and number of his works is bigger than his age. In four special chests he keeps hundreds of his works. Kalê Şinoyi is an example of a living history as these chests were also full of studies of his works done by the academia and other institutions. The man is well-read in literature and our interview with him was very fruitful. When we opened the topic of Kurdish customs he shared his opinion: “many changes to the original Kurdish culture occurred with the change of the religion and it came to villages from cities. A woman used to be able to breastfeed in public, but now it is impossible.”

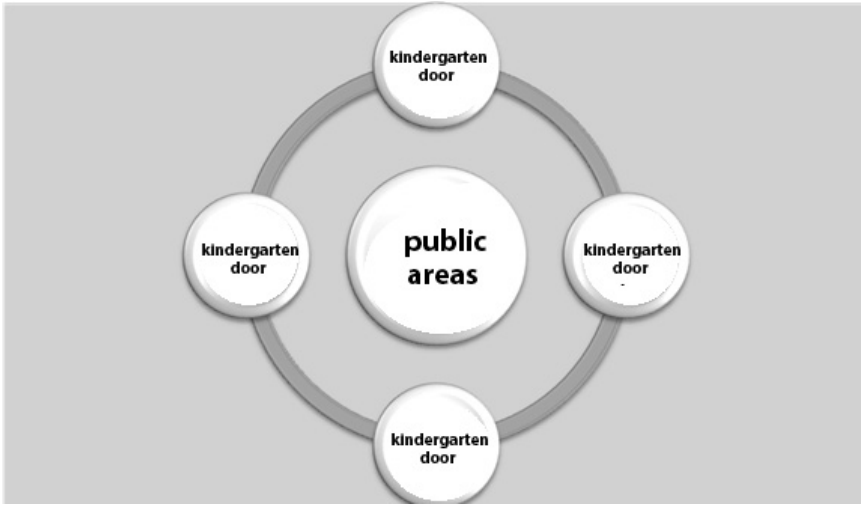
After the interview we walked around old ruins and Kalê Şinoyi told us about old houses’ structure and their utility. According to him old houses were built in a way that fostered socialization. The old man showed us such houses in the village. Houses he showed us were organized around one shared garden as doors of four houses opened to that garden. The garden was common space functioning as space for socialization. The graphic below is based on Kalê Şinoyi’s account. Later in the course of our fieldwork we encountered such houses in many regions.



Graphic 5. Spatial organization of a house in Gola Bozo village, Gürpınar-Van/Northern Kurdistan.

There exist in the world effective alternative models of education. One of them is Reggio Emilia's model.⁶⁴ Pre-school named like that was established in Northern Italy. Purpose of spatial organization of that school and Northern Kurdistan's houses is the same. Reggio Emilia schools are usually one-floor buildings with classrooms' doors opening to a common space. There are events organized in the school with the participation of teachers and parents. These events foster socialization of the children.

⁶⁴ Reggio Emilia is a village in Northern Italy. This village is known as Reggio Emilia Model. People of this village trust more in local enterprise. 10% of municipal budget of the village is allocated to schools. Schools in Reggio Emilia were built by families from the post-WWII ruins. Famous psychologist and philosopher Loris Malaguzzi created schools for Reggio Emilia under leadership of municipality and families. New organization of school was against traditional system. More schools were needed in the 1950s owing to growing birth rates and migrants from the South. At first Reggio Emilia school system was established by the parents and in time with regional government's support spread around the town. After the collapse of fascist regime free lifestyle became possible and everybody was free to conduct research. Once women gained their rights Reggio Emilia schools spread everywhere. Until 1967 management of Reggio Emilia schools was in parents' hands, afterwards municipality took the schools over. In 1996 Ministry of Education signed an agreement with Reggio Emilia municipality to train teachers. Reggio Emilia system is based on few principles: child is at the center of education and is guided by parents and teachers. Children's education is organized in two age groups of children 4 months old to 3 years old and 3-6 years old. (Pekdoğan, 2012).



Graphic 6. Spatial organization of a pre-school in Reggio Emilia, Northern Italy.

Kalê Şinoyi also spoke about Armenians who also lived in this region which makes it also belong to their ancestors. According to Kalê Şinoyi Armenians used to celebrate New Year on January 27th. This day was called “Christian Day of the Cross.” There used to be many festivities organized to celebrate the New Year. He recalled one of them in which a big pot was brought and filled with yoghurt. A small cross was dropped into yoghurt and stirred. Two or three people tried with their mouths to fork out the cross. The person who found the cross could keep it for the entire year and would become the Cross Owner (Cross Mukhtar).

This kind of competition is organized in Turkey on 23rd of April during National Sovereignty and Children’s Day celebrations, especially in Northern Kurdistan region. Yoghurt is put into a big pot and some money dropped in and stirred. Two or three children with their hands tied behind their back try to fetch the coins with their mouths. In some regions gold is used instead of money.

3. Destroying History

There are hundreds of churches around Northern Kurdistan but only few of them are in use nowadays.⁶⁵ During the research starting from Kars un-

65 According to UNESCO report from 1974, since 1923 out of 913 Armenian historical monuments 464 have been completely destroyed. 252 are ruined and 197 need repairs. See: The Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute (http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/cultural_genocide.php).

til Midyat county of Mardin we came across plenty of churches. Majority of these were either abandoned or ruined. In Pekran village in Digor county of Kars province the topic of churches surfaced in our interviews. There used to be two churches, one in the center of the village and one outside, but now both are in ruins. The one in the center is more devastated. According to the villagers Turkish army would in the evenings shoot at the church and sometimes they would knowingly open fire at the church to prevent anyone from entering and in order to further destroy it. The photograph (Graphic 7) below shows marks left by soldiers' bullets on the walls of the church.

State's policy of demolition and destruction of the churches was implemented by state forces or the society. One of the interviewees shared their ideas and opinions about state's repressive policy against Syriac churches:

"We've repaired this church in secret from state's military forces and we are still afraid that the state will demolish the church!"⁶⁶

One can see in the eyes of the villages fear and suspicion of the state. Syriacs in Midyat have worked to restore, build or repair dozens of destroyed churches. However, villagers still encounter obstacles and threats by the state.

⁶⁶ Syriac village of Aynwerd, Midyat, August 2014.



Graphic 7. Armenian church in Pekran village, Digor, Kars, after shelling by Turkish Armed Forces, July 2014.

The church below (Graphic 8) located in Hespistan village in Başkale county was abandoned and fell into ruin. Like in many other places it was destroyed by the villagers. According to the information provided by the locals stones from destroyed church were used to build houses. When we asked about reasons for this lack of care we realized that lack of religion is the primary

reason. In the process of assimilation, the state played a major role. In this respect the most vital matter is the effect this situation has on the society. Every massacre carried out by the state is witnessed by the society. Demolition of churches by the state is seen by inhabitants of villages and cities. The state uses this method of assimilation to have an impact on the society. At first it creates in the society a sense of fear and later leads the society to neglect its own culture and history. Once this period of negligence starts the state withdraws while the villagers, as if under a grip of a disease, start destroying cultural monuments. There is a saying describing this kind of situation: “he pushed people into fight and left to watch from afar.”⁶⁷



Graphic 8. Armenian church, Hespistan village, Elbak, Van, July 2014..

4. Situation of Kurdish language

The most important observation we have made during our study was whether people speak their mother tongue or not. In general it is possible to affirm that on account of years-long assimilationist efforts and dominant official language of the state, situation of mother tongue is bleak. This problem is more prevalent in cities. Villagers were also taken by the tide of assimila-

⁶⁷ This proverb is mostly told in Serhed region. It is used for people who incite a fight or do something bad and then they pull out of the situation to observe results from afar.

tion and Kurdish language is on the verge of disappearing. We witnessed the most striking assimilationist practices in places where special operations were carried out by the state. In these regions one can no longer observe assimilationist policies, but efforts to get assimilated. Even in places beyond state's authority Turkish has become dominant language of communication. We have witnessed this tendency as more prevalent in Dersim-Bingöl, Serhed-Diyarbakır regions while in Behdinan and Botan mother tongue is more commonly spoken.

Since the past until contemporary times, Turkish state has used different assimilationist tools (Turkish language, education, television, newspapers, books and other means of communication) against Kurds.⁶⁸ This policy resulted in negligence in the Kurdish society. With time the same assimilationist tools of the state began to be utilized by Kurds themselves. Once awareness of mother tongue ceased to exist, people started departing from the language. Generally speaking, this occurred mostly in the cities where the process continues to this day. Mothers speak to their children in Turkish and so do children among themselves.⁶⁹ As a result, Kurdish children cannot learn Kurdish language. Later those who did not know Turkish start speaking it with children. In Dersim, Bingöl, Serhed and Diyarbakır regions, like elsewhere, in city centers Kurdish children communicate with each other in Turkish. For Kurdish children Turkish is the language of education, playtime, family and has become the language of all other means of communication. If contemporary generation uses Turkish in their social life they will do so also in the future and their paths will not easily cross with the Kurdish language.

As part of our fieldwork we have noticed in many regions efforts to revive Kurdish and projects to develop reading and writing are on the rise. It became possible due to efforts of organizations focusing in their work on Kurdish language. Leading in the field is Association for Research and Development of Kurdish Language⁷⁰ (Kurdi-Der), which offers opportunities to learn Kurd-

68 After Turkifying Kurdish games, folk songs and tales they were presented as Turkish. Singing folk songs, writing, reading poems in Kurdish were considered as serious crimes. Those who participated in such activities were thrown into dungeons and tortured. Every instance of using Kurdish words or names in a newspaper was considered as treason (Beşikçi, 1991, p. 54).

69 "I speak Turkish with children.(...) I will speak Turkish until he starts school. He should know Turkish before going to school so that he doesn't have problems later. So that he won't have the problems I experienced. I had difficulties because I didn't know Turkish. He shall not have the same problems." (Çağlayan, 2014, p. 73).

70 Association for Research and Development of Kurdish Language (Kurdi-Der) is based

ish (in particular they offer Kurmanji and Zaza courses). It has been noticed that Kurdish education bears fruits since more and more young people make progress in reading and writing in Kurdish. In many regions participants of Kurdish courses have contributed to the development of Kurdish grammar and literature. As a result Kurdish literacy rate is steadily growing. Moreover, mother tongue undergoes revival in daily communication.

5. *A song, a mother and mother's tears*

After an interview in another village we moved to Uludere county in Şırnak. Women turned out to be the most helpful here. After a dinner consisting of cheese and tandoor bread we set off towards the village. First we visited a family with a new-born baby. A young mother from Uludere was helping us with the research. We were sitting under grapevine to which we were reaching to pick grapes. I still have in my mouth taste of ayran⁷¹ made of milk from the village.

From this house we went to pay another visit and met a storyteller, Şemsettin Amca.⁷² Once we dealt with introduction and short conversation he boarded our car and we went to a crystal clear river on the outskirts of the village. We left our luggage by the river bank and set up recording equipment in the shadow of a tree. Before we started recording, we had talked to Şemsettin Amca and young mother cried. Upon Şemsettin Amca's permission we began recording. Botan Miri's⁷³ life story which blended with the voice of Şemsettin Amca and the frothing waters of the river.

We were listening to Şemsettin Amca for three hours. It got late. We left for Uludere. Upon the entrance to Uludere we were stopped by the soldiers. After lengthy interrogations (where are you coming from? Where are you going? What's your purpose? Etc.) and ID check they also search thoroughly our car and allowed us to pass. Without official documents you cannot pass a check point to get home. Village and county are nearby, inhabitants of both sides are relatives. Due to military controls travelling is problematic.

in Diyarbakır. It has 37 branches in Northern Kurdistan and enjoys great interest of the people. Apart from Kürdi-Der there is a number of trade unions and cultural associations i.e.civil society organizations that teach, promote and develop Kurdish language.

71 A drink made of yoghurt and milk [Translator's note].

72 Lit. "uncle;" a familiar but polite form to address an older man [Translator's note].

73 A Kurdish leader from the first half of the 19th century [Translator's note].

After passing through military check points we set off towards Uludere. It got really dark. Smell of trees and fresh air cleansed us and made us drunk. We were exhausted, but the road was difficult: it was both narrow and tortuous so we all woke up. At some point I put on some songs and Rotinda⁷⁴'s song titled *Zilan* cut the silence. I had listened to that song before, but until that night I did not like it so much. The song starts as follows:

*Go and bring me seven colorful flowers
from seven mountain tops
Show these flowers around to Zilan
Bring these flowers and with seven embroilments beautify my Zilan
Make him so beautiful, so that he's not angry, my Zilan
He's handsome, he's a comrade...*

Everything that happened after this song. Our beautiful mother was sitting in the back and when I looked at her I saw her crying a river of tears. We also cried out the pain. I turned off the music as the pain breaking mother's heart became also ours. Her eighteen years old daughter twenty days earlier decided to embark on a long path to join the guerrillas. There was nothing we could say.

6. A song, a girl and girl's tears

It was in the evening, we were following tortuous road to Dersim. It was melancholic and scary journey. We were by Munzur mountain pass. The place where in 1938 people were pushed down from.⁷⁵ Munzur was flowing with us and we were flowing with it. We were all tired. All the companions in the back were asleep. A friend called Seval was with us in the car. He travelled with us around Dersim and helped a lot. Wind of Munzur valley blew in our faces, bringing at points shrieks and at others hope. I turned on the music. It was a folk song from Dersim region "Tew Veyvikê" (Oh, Come) composed by Erdoğan Emir.⁷⁶ The song started like this:

*Hey girl, look, it's fall
Let the blood on your skirt dry*

⁷⁴ Full name was Rotinda Yetkiner. He was born in 1963 in Varto. An artist at Mesopotamia Cultural Center (Wikipedia, 2014).

⁷⁵ After interview with Reşo Memed he showed us the place along Munzur river banks to which people were pushed down from the mountains. Reşo Memed, Ovacık, Center, Tunceli, August 2014.

⁷⁶ Erdoğan Emir is a musician from Dersim. He performs in Zaza.

Oh, oh, oh come
Oh, oh, oh my beauty
It's spring, everyone goes to the highlands,
If it was us, we would hold
Oh, oh, oh come
Oh, oh, oh my beauty

This song resonated well with the Munzur road. At that moment a scene from the movie “Azadiya Wenda” (Lost Freedom)⁷⁷ appeared before my eyes. Erdoğan Emir is singing that song. In the movie this music reminds Selvi about her brother and she begins to cry. A while later this scene from the movie became reality. Our friend Seval started crying tears of hope and longing. All of us had tears in our eyes; we stopped the music and remained in silence. The silence of the car became one with the roar of the river. Seval told us once again about her brother who a couple of months earlier had joined guerrilla forces of the Kurdistan Worker’s Party. As far as Seval knew her brother was in Dersim region, but she had no details as to his whereabouts.

These two moments we have just shared cannot be separated from oral literature of Kurdistan. Historical and social events shape and influence oral literature. Those kinds of events have reflected on our research and recorded material.

⁷⁷ Written and directed by Umur Hozatlı and screened in 2011. The film tells life stories of the victims of JİTEM (Gendarmerie Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism), which operated as a counter-guerrilla formation in the 90s.

CHAPTER 2

A. ORAL LITERATURE OF KURDISTAN

Oral Kurdish literature, just like other literary forms around the world, is concerned with lower classes' extolment of the upper ones. As such it was used as a tool of communication between feudalism and the shepherds and farm workers. According to Vilchevsky, feudalism was the force that protected national culture in Kurdistan.⁷⁸ With time oral literature entered daily life and as a result of bans on the language and culture became even stronger and richer. Nature, social relations, historical and any major events, entertainment and mourning have also contributed to richness of oral literary culture.

Kurdish oral literature consists of many different forms including tales, folk songs, riddles, eposes and memoir-adventure. Love, war, daily life, clan relations, migration, heroism, nature and Mesopotamian mythology are what influenced Kurdish oral tradition. Among recurring themes one finds heroism, handsome young men and beautiful girls, shrewd, ugly and coward characters, stories of betrayal etc.⁷⁹ *Dengbêjs* (minstrels) play major role in Kurdish oral literature and they are present in every region of Kurdistan to such an extent that we encountered dozens of them during our fieldwork. They not only sing folk songs and ballads that they call *kilam* and *stran* but know also other forms of oral literature (tales, riddles, chants etc.). Investing a lot of energy and effort they demonstrate their skills to large audiences. Their folk songs and ballads are important both in close relations as well as in establishing interactions. In daily and social life everybody refers to songs and ballads. Therefore *dengbêjs* occupy prominent place in Kurdish oral culture. It leads to competitions among minstrels.⁸⁰ Moreover, minstrels do not give much importance to other oral literary genres and they always give priority to folk

78 Many folk genres glorify feudal lords, sheikhs and kinsmen. It is necessary to see this type of literature as an element of Kurdish folklore. See: Nikitin, 2003, p. 436.

79 History Foundation, 2011

80 In Evdalê Zeynikê's account of his meeting with Şêx Silê he told us:

"It was a beautiful, beautiful night.

My heart was filled with joy and rain at the gathering of Tahar Xanê.

For nights and days I would shout and stay in silence

My voice got stuck, got lower,

Still, they told me, they told me mighty nice, that my body and voice were the cure, amen.

Welcome Şêx Silê, a good guest, say what you have to say and leave with your song" Evdal recited these words in such a smooth way as if without thinking. See: Uzun, 1991.

songs and ballads. In the center of Iğdır we spoke to *dengbêj* Bekir Amca⁸¹ and he told us the following about being a minstrel:

In the last years everyone went after the tale.

They gave up on folk songs and minstrels.

What's this?

What will you do with tales and riddles?

Dengbêj Bekir Amca, like most of other minstrels, wanted us to focus on his skills.

In every region there is a famous *dengbêj*. Once the grip of feudalism eased, Kurdish art and artists started to reach lower sections of Kurdish society. Minstrels were no longer performing exclusively for feudal lords and masters. *Dengbêj* Şakiro was one of them. Şakiro is adored not only in Serhed region but in the entire Kurdistan. In Zeynel village in Ağrı Diyadin county *dengbêj* Faruk shared with us his memories of Şakiro. In the village of Zeynel *dengbêj* Şakiro and a villager named Bişar Amca experienced the following encounter:

Bişar Amca is ill and he has come to the end of his life. A group at the main square of the village is talking about Şakiro. Bişar Amca says:

Oh, oh! I wish Şakiro would come here now and sang us some songs. If I heard him in my last moments it would be enough!

A short while after Bişar Amca's wish, Şakiro comes down to the square. That day Şakiro⁸² sings songs for the group at the square and Bişar Amca's wish is granted.

Minstrels play prominent role in Kurdish society. Many different folk songs and eposes reach listeners on many social platforms. It is widely accepted that Kurdish oral literature and minstrels are one. However, this study shows that products of oral culture are reproduced not only by minstrels. They invest more skills in ballads, folk songs and eposes. Except for these genres, they give little importance and time to tales, riddles, chants, lamentations and lullabies. On the other hand, tales, riddles, chants and other oral literary products are common in daily lives. They are told not just to wider audiences, but also in the families, in daily life, during playtime, work and study, mourning

81 Lit. „amca” means in Turkish „uncle.” Here it is used as a title to show respect [Translator's note].

82 In that period Şakiro would walk from a village to a village to sing songs. From Tucî village he accidentally came to Zeynel village.

and festivities. Sometimes the elderly or those who memorized these forms re-tell them. During our fieldwork some *dengbêjs* would prefer to sing songs and they would not wish to tell tales, sometimes they admitted they did not know tales and other genres so well.

B. GENRES OF ORAL LITERATURE IN KURDISTAN

Many Kurdish writers and researchers have classified and discussed Kurdish oral literature. Here we only present two classifications. According to “Secondary School Kurdish Language and Literature Textbook” oral literature can be organized into seven categories:

1. *Proverbs*
2. *Epigram*
3. *Tales*
4. *Nursery rhymes*
5. *Riddles*
6. *Idioms*
7. *Eposes*

Pertev⁸³ classified folklore literary products as follows:

1. *Unknown artist/Anonymous*
 - a. *Prose*
 - Proverbs*
 - Idioms*
 - Legends*
 - Tales*
 - Folk tales*
 - Anecdotes/Yokes*
 - Saga*
 - b. *Poetic*
 - Eposes*
 - Riddles*
 - Chants*
 - Spring songs*
 - Epigrams*
 - Folk songs with long vocal solo*

83 Notes from Kurdish classes Mardin Artuklu University prepared by Ramazan Pertev.

Elegy/Lullabies
Folk songs and ballads

2. *Known artist*

a. *Minstrel literature*

Includes songs of heroism, war, mourning, lyricism, epigram, plateau folk songs, arguments, work, study etc.

b. *Dervish (religious-mystical) literature*

Tawhid⁸⁴, litany, Na'at⁸⁵, Hijraname⁸⁶, Hilye (talks about Prophet's attire), Miraciye⁸⁷, Mehtername/Shefaatname, Mahsarname⁸⁸, Cengname, Maktel (about someone's murder), eulogy, saga, Mevrit⁸⁹, Pendname/Nasihatname⁹⁰, Nevroziye.

There are differences between these two classifications in terms of details. Pertev's classification is more detailed in comparison with secondary schools textbook. Classification used in this book is explanatory for our collection. Both goals of our research and information obtained in the field contributed to this classification. In our study we mostly focused of works that can be used as educational materials for children. Therefore we compiled mostly tales, riddles, nursery rhymes, lullabies, games, autumn songs, proverbs, idioms etc. In this book we attempt to focus on children's literature and examine works we have collected from this perspective.

1. *Tales (Chirok)*

Before we share our observations from the fieldwork with regard to the use of the term *chirok* and *masal* (tale) we would like to discuss ideas of Kurdish writers and researchers and contrast them with Pertev's.⁹¹ In Kurdish literature there are debates and differences in opinions in regard to *chirok*. For instance, Firat Cewherî believes that "at the present time for this kind of literature I prefer to use the term *chirok* or like Kurds in the South say short stories

84 Poems about creation and universe [Translator's note].

85 Poetry praising Prophet Muhammad [Translator's note].

86 Poetry about Prophet's escape from Mecca to Medina [Translator's note].

87 Poetry about Prophet's ascension to heavens [Translator's note].

88 Poetry about death and afterlife [Translator's note].

89 Poetry celebrating birth of the Prophet [Translator's note].

90 The book of advice [Translator's note].

91 Pertev, 2008, p. 88-89.

(*kurtechirok*).” In Hawar (1932-1943), Ronahî (1942-1945), Roja Nû (1943-1946), Hêviya Welêt (1963-1965), Çiya (1965-1970), Hêvî (1983-1992) and many other old and new magazines the term *chirok* has been in use. Moreover, a story written by Fuat Temo was published under the category of *chirok* in Rojî Kurd (1913). Just like former Soviet Kurds would use word *serhati* (*anî-serüven*) apart from the word “story”, this word encompasses story, short story, adventure, just like in English “story” or “short story”.

Cewherî continues his argument by saying that “the fact also is that many people understand *chirok* like a Turkish fable (*masal*) or Swedish saga. In many regions of Kurdistan people use world fable (*masal*) for *chirok*, however, in some places also term *chirchirokis* in use. That is the word used in Hawar. No matter in how many regions terms *chirok* and *chirchirok* are interchangeable, the difference between them is clear. The term *chirok* is commonly used in daily life, social communication, in people’s language. If someone starts talking about their life or somebody else’s life and the listener asks question, then the person telling the story says “the stories are mighty long” or “it’s a long story” or “it’s sure a long story.”

Rohat Alakom’s view of this issue is the following: “without doubt *chirok* (*masal*) is one of the most valuable forms of oral culture. Tales are integral elements of folklore as they are created by the people themselves. In some periodicals tales are called memoirs or adventures, but this terminology is inaccurate since memoirs’ authors are known and it is modern literary genre. Moreover, in terms of topic and subject they are different from fables. This causes a great deal of confusion in naming genres. Sometimes also both forms are called a fable (*chirok*).

According to Zeynelabidin Zînar, works such as *chirok* (*hikaye*-story) and *chirchirok* (*masal*-tale/fable) in fact evolved from one another, but there is a distinguishable difference. At the core of a story there is an actual event, that when retold might have been modified. For instance, some stories mention names of padishahs, kings or sultans. On account of these names we can estimate the time when some of the stories were first created. In case of tales, however, there is no actual event. The person who invented the fantasy and the plot or who told it first remains unknown. In some regions of Kurdistan there are other terms for tale (*masal*/*chirchirok*) e.g.: *çivanok*, *çirvanok*, *xeberoşk*.

According to our research people in Kurdish regions generally use the following words for a story: *çirok*, *çironek*, *çirnok*, *hikyat*, *xebrişok*, *dilok*, *sonik*,

sanîk,estanika (Zaza). We follow Kurdish writers and researchers in using the term *chirok* for a tale. In Kurdish society term “fabl” (*fable*) is not in use, but tales we are going to be discusses here are *fables*. In Kurdish storytelling traditions a tale starts usually like this:

*One day
 Bless the listeners with good fortune and beauty,
 All the neighbors too,
 All the poor and the wretched too,
 Give a share to those who wandered off,
 Şenglo run for the axe
 Menglo run for the pickaxe
 Honky ponky calves are in the reeds
 If there's onion you can't get enough of Keledoş⁹².*

This paragraph both motivates the person who is to tell the tale and indicates the listeners that the story is about to begin and gets their attention.

In Kurdish society ballads-folk songs and tales are typically sang in the evening. In the daytime, during work or any other activities *uzun hava*, love songs (*dîlok*), folk songs/*ghazal* (*kilam*) or other types of oral literature are sung (e.g. *lawîk*). Depending on the length of ballads-folk songs and tales, everybody gathers sometimes every day or every two-three days. The house, where the audience gathers, typically belongs to a highly respected member of the community or it is any other common space. This gathering is organized usually for minstrels. Gatherings solely for tales are smaller than the ones organized for *dengbêjs*. The storyteller establishes the gathering and continues talking until late night hours encouraged by tea and coffee treats. Depending on the topic, some tales and eposes take four or six or even ten nights to tell, sometimes they finish before dawn. These events also offer space for socialization as many people come together and discuss daily lives and community's problems, they look for remedies and make decisions as to how to resolve the problems. These happen between ballads and folk songs and sometimes at private gatherings, but generally at *divan* gathered by a *dengbêj*. This event is at the same time indicator of a communal character of life.

⁹² Dish from Bingöl [Translator's note].



Graphic 9. Children listening to a storyteller. Village of Ewçî, Iğdır, July 2014.

Storytelling in Northern Kurdistan is not as present as it used to be due to technological development, modernity and new means of communication. In the regions where we carried out our research it appears that oral culture is in danger of extinction.

In every region there are individuals known as *dengbêj- chîrokbêj*. They work to improve their rhetorical skills and keep up with the times. Around 80% of the people we have interviewed were trained in rhetoric and interpretation of ballads-folk songs and possess broad knowledge of the field. Sometimes when talking about the past they were able to explain why and how cultural transmission takes place. The extent of knowledge of and about literary forms changes depending of the age group. Those 40-60 year old possess broad knowledge, those aged 20-40 are less knowledgeable and those aged 10-20 know very little or nothing.



Graphic 10. Elderly lady called Hakime is telling a story. Village of Saidbey, Diyadin, Ağrı, July 2014.

Subjects of tales told to children speaking Zaza, Kurmanji or Syriac are quite similar. The hero of the tales in Northern Kurdistan is a fox. We have collected dozens of tales about the fox. They also exist in Syriac language. Although we label them as "children's tales" they are also listened by adults. We present examples of two stories in Kurmanji and Zaza. These two tales talk about the fox and its characteristics.

Many tales in Kurdish oral literature are told in different variations. Like in the case of "Şengê and Pengê" (Diyarbakır), "Şengilo and Mengilo" (Serhed), "Zeng and Beng" (Behdinan) topic is the same, but the wording is different.

"Şengê and Pengê" (Diyarbakır):

*My Şengê (Merry), my Pengê (Joyful),
Your mother went to the highlands,
She had a leaf of hackberries,
Her breast got full of milk,
Hurry up! come to drink.*

"Şengilo and Mengilo" (Serhed):

*Şengil, Mengil, Qaliçengil
Had been to the highlands*

*Had in my teeth the spinters
Milk filled the breasts
To feed you your mother comes
Open the doors!*

“Zeng and Beng” (Behdinan):

*My Zeng, My Beng,
Mother's gone to the highlands,
Munched the grasses,
Milk came into her breasts,
Open for your mother the doors,
To feed you your mother comes.*

The Fox and the Grandma⁹³

Once upon a time there was an old grandma in a village. This old grandma every day got up, milked the sheep and put the milk into the kitchen. But the grandma was troubled by a fox who came every day and drunk the milk. It continued for days and one day the grandma could not stand it any longer. She took a sickle and started to guard the milk. Around midnight she saw that the door was slowly opening. A fox entered and was going to the milk. The grandma was not going to let him drink it again so she took a swing with the sickle at his tail. The fox got away but without his tail. When he went to his friends they were laughing at him: “Tail, fail, no tail! Where’re you from? Where’re you going’?”

The fox was very embarrassed. He went to the grandma to get his tale back.

Fox: Grandma! Grandma! Give back Uncle Fox’s tale so that friends don’t tell me “Tail, fail, no tail! Where’re you from? Where’re you going’?”

Grandma: Go to the sheep and bring me my milk.

The fox went to the sheep.

Fox: Sheep! Sheep! give me your milk. I’ll give it to the grandma so that grandma gives the fox back his tail so that my friends don’t say “Tail, fail, no tail! Where’re you from? Where’re you going’?”

Sheep: Go to the forest and bring me an oak leaves.

The fox went to the forest.

93 Bitlis, Kesrik, Hêrvêş, Nurullah Demir- Zeliha Demir, 2014.

Fox: Forest! Forest! Give me oak leaves. I'll give them to the sheep so that she gives me milk. I'll give it to the grandma so that grandma gives the fox back his tail so that my friends don't say "Tail, fail, no tail! Where're you from? Where're you going'?"

Forest: Go to the blacksmith and bring me a sickle.

The fox went to the blacksmith.

Fox: Blacksmith! Blacksmith! Give me a sickle. I'll give it to the forest so that it gives me oak leaves. I'll give the leaves to the sheep so that she gives me milk. I'll give it to the grandma so that grandma gives the fox back his tail so that my friends don't say "Tail, fail, no tail! Where're you from? Where're you going'?"

Blacksmith: Go, bring me an egg.

The fox went to a hen.

Fox: Hen! Hen! Give me an egg. I'll give it to the blacksmith so that he gives me a sickle. I'll give the sickle to the forest so that it gives me oak leaves. I'll give the leaves to the sheep so that she gives me milk. I'll give it to the grandma so that grandma gives the fox back his tail so that my friends don't say "Tail, fail, no tail! Where're you from? Where're you goin'?"

Hen: Go to the field and bring me some wheat.

The fox went to the field.

Fox: Field! Field! Give me wheat. I'll give it to the hen so that she gives me an egg. I'll give it to the blacksmith so that he gives me a sickle I'll give the sickle to the forest so that it gives me oak leaves. I'll give the leaves to the sheep so that she gives me milk. I'll give it to the grandma so that grandma gives the fox back his tail so that my friends don't say "Tail, fail, no tail! Where're you from? Where're you going'?"

Field: Go to the cow and bring me some manure.

The fox went to the cow.

Fox: Cow! Cow! Give me some manure. I'll give it to the field so it gives me wheat. I'll give the wheat to the hen so that she gives me an egg. I'll give it to the blacksmith so that he gives me a sickle. I'll give the sickle to the forest so that it gives me oak leaves. I'll give the leaves to the sheep so that she gives me milk. I'll give it to the grandma so that grandma gives the fox back his tail so that my friends don't say "Tail, fail, no tail! Where're you from? Where're

you going’?”

Cow: Go to the hay-barn and bring me some hay.

The fox went to hay-barn.

Fox: Barn! Barn! Give me some hay. I’ll give it to the cow so she gives me some manure. I’ll give it to the field so it gives me wheat. I’ll give the wheat to the hen so that she gives me an egg. I’ll give it to the blacksmith so that he gives me a sickle. I’ll give the sickle to the forest so that it gives me oak leaves. I’ll give the leaves to the sheep so that she gives me milk. I’ll give it to the grandma so that grandma gives the fox back his tail so that my friends don’t say “Tail, fail, no tail! Where’re you from? Where’re you going’?”

Hay-barn: It’s raining, my roof is leaking.

The fox climbed on the roof of the hay-barn. He jumped up and down, fixed all the damaged places and went again to the hay-barn.

Hay-barn gave some hay and he brought it to the cow. The cow gave some manure and he brought it to the field. The field gave the wheat and he brought it to the hen. The hen gave an egg and he brought it to the blacksmith. The blacksmith gave a sickle and he brought it to the forest. The forest gave oak leaves and he brought them to the sheep. The sheep gave him milk and he brought it the grandma. Elderly lady embellished fox’s tail with flowers and sewed torn tail in its place.

Grandma: “Go to your friends, they will no longer tell you “Tail, fail, no tail! Where’re you from? Where’re you going’?”

The fox went jumping happily to see his friends.

Fox’s friends: Fox!

Fox: Yes?

Fox’s friends: How did you get such a beautiful tail?

The fox wanted to take revenge on his laughing friends and said: I went to that valley of the nomads and there was a pond. I dipped my tail in the water until morning. When I woke up my tail was like this.

Fox’s friends: Let’s also go to the pond tonight so that our tails are also so beautiful.

All the fox’s friends went together to the pond. They dipped their tails in the water and were waiting for the morning. Meanwhile the fox run to the village

and showed himself to the children. They followed him to the pond. When fox's friends saw the children they tried to run away. The waterfroze. Their tails were frozen in the water. To save their lives foxes had to run.

Fox's friends: Well, you said our tails would be embellished just like yours. Our tails are completely torn!

Fox: You mocked me, so I got even.

In Kurdish culture oral literary products have been passed on and memorized and that is how they were preserved to this day. In this study we also recorded *Pîrê û Rovî* (The Fox and the Grandma) tale, which just like *Şengê* and *Pengê* tale, is known and is still told everywhere in Kurdistan.

In previous studies, like other tales, tale of the Fox and the Grandma⁹⁴ was

94 **Pîrê û Rovî:** Every day an elderly lady collected milk and put it into a pot. Also every day a fox came and drunk her milk. One day the elderly lady set a trap. The fox came as usual and drank the milk but the woman took him by his tail and cut it off. The fox quickly made off. He went to his friends who mockingly said: "Hutoz, mitoz, your tail is on your nose (poçik ser poz). The fox got embarrassed and went to the old woman and said: "Grandma, give me my tail so I can go to my friends." She replied: "Go, bring me some milk." The fox went to the goat and asked: "Goat, give me milk for the old woman so that she gives me my tail and I can go to my friends." The goat said: "Go to the tree and get me an oak leaf. I'll eat the leaf and give you my milk so you give it to the old woman and she gives you your tail and you can go to your friends." The fox went to the tree and said: "Tree, give an oak tree for the goat. I'll give the leaf to the goat, it will give me milk. I'll give milk to the old woman so she gives me my tail and I can go to my friends." The tree replied: "Go and get me water and water me. I'll give you an oak leaf and you give it to the goat. The goat will eat the leaf and give you milk so you give it to the old woman and she gives you your tail and you can go to your friends." The fox went to the water and said: "Water, come to the tree, so it gives an oak leaf. I'll give the leaf to the goat, it will give me milk. I'll give milk to the old woman so she gives me my tail and I can go to my friends." The water said: "Go and get some girls to dance here. Then I'll come to the tree and it will give you the leaf. You'll give it to the goat and it will eat the leaf and give you milk so you give it to the old woman and she gives you your tail and you can go to your friends." The fox went to the girls and said: "Girls, you need to go dance in the water so that water goes to the tree and it gives me an oak leaf. I'll give the leaf to the goat, it will give me milk. I'll give milk to the old woman so she gives me my tail and I can go to my friends." They said: "Go, bring us shoes so we go to the water to dance and so that water goes to the tree. The tree will give you the leaf. You'll give it to the goat and it will eat the leaf and give you milk so you give it to the old woman and she gives you your tail and you can go to your friends." Now the fox went to the shoemaker and said: "Shoemaker, make shoes for the girls so they go to the water and dance so that water goes to the tree and it gives me an oak leaf. I'll give the leaf to the goat, it will give me milk. I'll give milk to the old woman so she gives me my tail and I can go to my friends." He told the fox to bring him an egg, so the fox went to the hens and said: "Hen, give me an egg, I'll give it to the shoemaker so he makes shoes for the girls. The girls will dance in the water so it goes to the tree and it gives me an oak leaf. I'll give the leaf to the goat, it will give me milk. I'll give milk to the old woman so she gives me my tail and I can go to

also recorded. This tale was documented around seventy years ago by a Kurdish researcher and folklorist Heciyê Cindî. It is clear from our research that in seventy years since his study, against all the bans and difficulties, Kurds preserved their oral culture. When we compare two versions of *Pîrê û Rovî* (The Fox and the Grandma) we can notice that there are no big differences.

my friends.” Hens replied: “Go, get us some food.” The fox went to harvestman and asked: “Give me some corn, I’ll give it to the hens so they give me eggs. I’ll give eggs to the shoemaker so he makes shoes for the girls that girls so they go to the water and dance so that water goes to the tree and it gives me an oak leaf. I’ll give the leaf to the goat, it will give me milk. I’ll give milk to the old woman so she gives me my tail and I can go to my friends.” The harvestman said: “Come, help me with the harvest and I’ll give you some corn. You’ll give it to the hens and they’ll give you eggs. You’ll give eggs to the shoemaker so that he makes shoes for the girls. They will go to the water to dance so that water goes to the tree. The tree will give you the leaf. You’ll give it to the goat and it will eat the leaf and give you milk so you give it to the old woman and she gives you your tail and you can go to your friends.” The fox went to the hay-barn and cleaned it and so he was given the corn. He took the corn and brought it to the hens. They ate the corn. Each one of them gave him an egg. He took the eggs and brought them to the shoemaker. He made shoes and gave them to the fox. The fox took the shoes and brought them to the girls. The girls wore shoes and went to dance in the water. The water came to the tree and it gave an oak leaf. The fox took the oak leaf to the goat and it gave him milk. He brought milk to the old woman. The women embellished the tail with bells and beads and gave it to the fox. The fox returned to his friends. They said: “Look at this fox! We used to mock him, say Hutoz, mitoz, your tail is on your nose (poçik ser poz), now your tail is all in bells and decorations.” They asked the fox: “Where did you get this?” The fox replied: “Go and put your tails until the morning in the water. It will all be embellished and with bells.” The foxes went to the water and dipped their tails until the morning. Water around their tails froze. They could not take their tails out. They pulled, but couldn’t get them out. They said: “Now our tails are full of a decoration, that’s why they don’t come out.” The men came to the lake and saw it full of foxes. They said: “Let’s bring the dogs!” They went for the dogs. When the foxes saw dogs coming, they run away tearing off their tails. They went to their friends and they heard from them: say Hutoz, mitoz, your tail is on your nose (poçik ser poz). See: Cindî, H., 2011.

<i>Refrain of The Fox and the Grandma</i> – 1940 ... The fox the corn and brought it to the hens. They ate the corn. Each one of them gave him an egg. He took the eggs and brought them to the shoe-maker. He made shoes and gave them to the fox. The fox took the shoes and brought them to the girls. The girls wore shoes and went to dance in the water. The water came to the tree and it gave an oak leaf. The fox took the oak leaf to the goat and it gave him milk. He brought milk to the old woman. The women embellished the tail with bells and beads and gave it to the fox. The fox returned to his friends. They said: “Look at this fox! We used to mock him, say Hutoz, mitoz, your tail is on your nose (poçik ser poz), now your tail is all in bells and decorations.” Taken from recordings of Soviet Kurds.	<i>Refrain of The Fox and the Grandma</i> – 2014 ... The fox climbed on the roof. He jumped up and down, fixed all the damaged places and went to the hay-barn. Hay-barn gave some hay and he brought it to the cow. The cow gave some manure and he brought it to the field. The field gave the wheat and he brought it to the hen. The hen gave an egg and he brought it to the blacksmith. The blacksmith gave a sickle and he brought it to the forest. The forest gave an oak leaf and he brought it to the sheep. The sheep gave him milk and he brought it the grandma. Elderly lady embellished fox's tail with flowers and embroilments. She sewed torn tail in its place. Grandma: “Go to your friends, they will no longer tell you “Tail, fail, no tail ! Where're you from? Where're you going'?”... Recorded in Serhed region.
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Zaza version

Let everything be yours (for you) (*Wa pêro to rê bo⁹⁵*)

*They say:
A wolf, bear and fox
Become brothers,
Went hunting together,
Mate, bear's body was enormous,
In the past friendship was also friendship,
Three buddies raised tails,
They followed fox's way.*

95 Tunceli, Ovacık, Reşo Memed, 2014.

*The fox said to himself:
"Hmm, how should I do this,
Let's share these dead animals.
The bear eats a lot,
The wolf is a glutton,
Nothing will be left for me."
The fox said:
"Bear, mate, come here,
Let's share these dead animals like brothers do,
So that everyone eats as much as they need,
So that no one is wronged."
The bear got angry but didn't show it.
He said: "Fox, mate, divide them."
The fox said: "Wolf suffered a lot, let him divide."
The wolf wagged his tail,
Asked: "Shall I divide them?"
The bear: "C'mon, let's see, divide them mate."
The wolf said: "One dead animal for me,
One for the fox,
one for you.
We are all brothers,
Let everyone eat what they need."
The bear got angry and growled.
He hit the wolf in the ear with his paw.
The wolf died from one blow.
The bear turned to the fox and said:
"Divide these among us."
Fox's legs started to shake.
He said: "Bear, mate, what shall I divide?
You're our big brother.
One of these is your breakfast,
One is lunch,
One is dinner."
The bear asked: "Fox, mate, how did you come up with this idea of justice?"
The fox replied: "From our brother's ear.
Our brother divided fairly,
You got angry and our friend is dead,
If I too, say: 'two for you, one for me,'
I'll be dead too.
Let all be yours, no sharing."*

Children at ages 2-3 can start listening to tales. No matter how much they are able to understand, they do like tales. Not just tales, but all folkloric works perform four basic functions: to make time spent together enjoyable; to nurture and strengthen customs, social values and structure; to educate and transmit knowledge onto the next generation; to preserve values of the community against pressure and difficulties and to help release tensions resulting from these pressures and difficulties.⁹⁶ With regard to this matter Alakom believes that: "Kurdish tales are very entertaining and educational. In these tales we follow imaginary characters in their extraordinary efforts when confronted with hardships, helplessness, poverty and destitution. These works gradually get more serious starting with the opposition of good-bad, beautiful-ugly, clean-dirty but they even may end with the dilemma whether to kill or not to kill, even if this is unwanted. Giants, commotion, adventures and incidents presented in Kurdish tales also reflect social pains, situation and worries and lay out before one's eyes human interactions and modes of communication. Kurdish tales are abundant with worldviews, customs, traditions and characters. The society in an artistic way, using language of tales defines anew hundred years long desires, hopes and dreams of the community. Over time the society has created thousands of stories or satisfied our artistic needs as it has satisfied us. Even though Kurdish storytelling is not real life, it gave us a gift of a fictional world. When one looks closer at Kurdish storytelling, one can observe that stories are abundant with topics and motives. The existence of such a variety of motives shows that the society fed all of these into the stories, made itself one of the subjects. In brief, one cannot separate; tear apart the society from the content of the tales."⁹⁷

As it has already been mentioned, advice and warnings occupy prominent place in Kurdish oral literature, however, we will focus here on its educational aspect. In this context, tales told children play an important role. It is valid for all genres of oral literature, especially in tales, diaries and songs. In Kurdish tales subjects have more real-life dimensions. A narrative creates a platform for all these social issues to be evaluated. According to scientific research⁹⁸ the narrative of tales has a positive influence on children with regard to their socialization. It has been observed that through tales children develop patterns of interaction between "themselves" and "the others." Tales, as oral literary products, play an important role in cultural transmission.

96 Pertev, 2008.

97 Alakom, 1994, p. 8.

98 Şahin, 2011.

2. Proverbs

Generally, proverbs are not said in the same way in different regions. While there are minor differences in the way they are phrased, there are no differences in terms of meaning. They are used in social and daily life. Usually, during gatherings elderly members of the community tell proverbs. Like other Kurdish oral literary products, proverbs also give advice or teach a lesson. Below are few examples:

Bad people don't act (work), dead buried people don't lift their heads. (Behdinan)

Good-doers are rewarded, wrong-doers get what they deserve from God. (Behdinan)

When a thief robs a thief the heavens and earth shake. (Behdinan)

A lion is a lion. Neither female nor male. (Serhed)

People rather be a month-old cow than a year-old ox. (Serhed)

A village without a garden, a tent without sheep and a man saying "I", "I" are no good. (Botan)

Some resemble him, some come from him. (Botan)

Hide the stone in the summer in the haystack, you will need it in January and December. (Botan)

It's the fox's meat: neither halal nor haram.⁹⁹ (Botan)

Roaming fox is better than sleeping lion. (Botan)

3. Idioms

Idioms are specific part oral literature. Since they are used in everyday life, they are element of the way culture is used and transmitted. Comparing to other oral literary products, idioms are easier and more frequently used in Kurdish social life. Use of idioms shows richness of the culture of the language. According to different studies¹⁰⁰ idioms bring to the fore differences between societies therefore have become subject of philological, literary and sociological studies. Furthermore, children, who learn idioms become aware of the richness of their culture and form bond with their culture and core values.. Some of the idioms from Northern Kurdistan are presented below:

99 Helal – permissible by religion (Islam); Haram – not permissible [Translator's note].

100 Idioms, indicate society's narrative strength. See: Mert, 2009.

Botan and Behdinan regions:¹⁰¹

*He listened with the back of his ear
Fires fell on the foot
Waters of the head are boiling
Have you come to take the fire?
He talks, but doesn't do
You're the one whose liver I'd eat
His wound is the size of flea's wound*

Serhed Region:¹⁰²

*I wish my heart was a garden, so I could blossom in front of you.
They told the cat his shit was a cure and he saved it
Yes, world, (Oh, heavens)
Lazy donkey farts abundantly
No one says my ayran¹⁰³ is sour.
Killing a hero is fulfilling, desiring a woman burns.
One would think you have got frozen
Nose is curling
Harmless snake
A cat next to tandoori
When I want to hunting, my hound needs the toilet
He rolled up his sleeves
He'd eat bones from us and bark up other's doors
Master's property's goes, shepard's life hurts
Whichever it is, it'll do
Death is better than elderness
He's four-kidneyed
Even the dead would laugh at him
He was an ass and he went as an ass
The nose doesn't burn*

4. Chants

People call chants “*bilerzok, bēhnok, zūgotinok, lihevanînok, lezgotin* and *lezvate*.” In Botan and Behdinan regions also term “*metelok-çîvanok*” is used.

101 Şükrü Acer Hakkari- Çukurca-Çığıllı village- 2014, Abdülkerim Pusat, Cizre city center, 2014

102 Faruk Birgül, Ağrı, Diyadin, Zeynel 2014, Siraceddin, Muş, Sêgir 2014.

103 A drink consisting of water and yoghurt [Translator's note].

They are used during entertaining competitions. There is no need to gather people for chants as they can be said anywhere and anytime. Chants are influenced by geography, climate and social events. Usually they begin tales and are said in a rhythmic manner. Chants are about social events, feelings, ideas, climate and nature. They are made of strange meaningful or meaningless words, quarrels and contests and since are said in a poetic, fast and rhythmic way their purpose is to amuse. In the course of our research we have noticed that there are also different kinds of chants:

1. *The ones said at the beginning of tales*
2. *The ones said for competitions*
3. *The ones said for games*

We will focus here on the third type: the ones said for games. Since they are told for fun we can see them as the starting point for Kurdish oral children literature. Kurdish children drew on the richness of Kurdish oral culture and created their own oral literature. We will use chants to explain how Kurdish children made their own oral literature. Below are few examples of chants:

Serhed Region:¹⁰⁴

- *On a tiny miny road
The rose's among the bushes
I threw it a punch
I entered goodness*
- *The door's open
Bread and cheese are on one another
Red cow was beaten
Mother was kissed*
- *Either on kohl or the churn
My old lady's hip's broken
She didn't give me my son
Sit on the churn, just sit on it*
- *Sefo, where's the son, that donkey?
Where's donkey, son of a donkey*

¹⁰⁴ İsa Akkuş, Şeref naz Çiçek, Güzel Babacan, Sevgül Akkuş, Sadrettin Karabalık, Keziban Akkuş Bitlis-Adilcevaz-Wêrangaz, 2014.

*They took the donkey to the court
They made the donkey talk
Strong knife in the pocket
Kill the donkey in its sleep*

Behdinan Region:¹⁰⁵

- *Three each of the yellow gold coins
Hey you! Bastard born from sin
Go to the ends of the world
Saw how it was
If you don't see twenty four karat
Come to my door armed with a club*
- *Wind is the wind during harvest
The sound of a shoe in the field
Who brings bad luck
Shall have their eyes fall out*
- *I was a lump of hair
One was the tail
One was sh*t
This mouth went for berries
This hand went for hair
This foot stepped into sh*t*
- *My father
Simo with a walking stick
Simo with a walking stick that has seven holes*

Botan Region:¹⁰⁶

- *Our tent got stuck in the asphalt, asphalt stuck to our tent
Our tent got stuck in the asphalt, asphalt stuck to our tent*
- *I went to Hodja's house, I saw a red apple, in the arms of Hodja's wife
I took a bite of the apple on my Hodja's wife's arm*

¹⁰⁵ Abdülkerim Altürk,, Şırnak, Uludere, 2014.

¹⁰⁶ Silêmanê Sofî, Cizre, Dêrgul, 2014, Mihemedê Gindar, Nafiye Kodak, Cizre, Ernebat, 2014.

- *A religious man came to us wearing a crown, I said:
You, crown, what a crown you are. You, crown, what a crown you are. You,
crown, what a crown you are.*
- *Forty birds and two birds and two cuckoos by this side of the water
Each of forty birds and two birds and two cuckoos called out to them from
this side of the water
Forty birds and two birds and two cuckoos asked the ones on the other
side of the water "how many birds and cuckoos are you?
"We are forty birds and two birds and two cuckoos," they replied*

5. Riddles

Terms used for riddles are *tiştanok*, *tiştonek*, *mamîk*, *çîvanok*, *çîbenok* (Zaza). Forms of the riddles depend on climate, nature and social events. Both meaning and content sometimes vary from region to region. According to Karademir¹⁰⁷ historical events and persons, voice impersonations, exceptional events, real or abstract fantastic ideas are expressed in a manner of rhythmic questions. This kind of anonymous literary forms are called riddles. They usually start with the following phrase: "I've got a thing, a thingy. It's a riddle, my riddle..." After chants riddles are most relevant for children. They are used by them for competition. Some examples of riddles we present below.

- *A female teacher asked another teacher:
There exists a page in the world
That you can't write on, but you can eat
What's that?
(Cabbage)*
- *I've got a thing, a thingy
It's wrapped in linen
Has no foot nor heel
Goes to the stream every day
(Jug)*
- *I've got a thing, a thingy
I hit the rock, it doesn't break
I hit the water, it breaks*

¹⁰⁷ Karademir, 2008.

What's that?

(Paper)

- *366 storks*
Half are white, half are black
And two bulls and twelve cows
What's that?
(366 days, both darkness and night, daytime and light, they follow one another, 12 cows are months)
- *Hocus Pocus, son's longer than the father*
(Fire and smoke)
- *It's a bride in the morning and a miserable at night*
(Star)
- *A blonde rides her bull in the sky*
(Churn)
- *It's a dark gap, snow falls in*
(Chimney)

Behdininan region:

- *It's a riddle, my riddle*
I went to a world without people
I ate two boneless sheep
I rode a lifeless horse
(A child: there is nobody in a mother's womb apart from it; when born it drinks milk from mother's breasts, which are boneless; it is put into a crib, which is still object)
- *There's a tree in the world*
Has twelve branches
On each branch there's a nest
In each nest there're 30 eggs
(Year)

- *Went to the mill
Saw a weird thing
A seven-headed thug
(Crab)*
- *Aggressive on the top,
Aggressive at the bottom,
Shiny eyes, long whiskers
(Rabbit)*
- *Long and narrow
Wide and narrow
Short and narrow
(Girth)*
- *I've got a thing, a thingy
When it comes loosen your belt
If you don't eat it, it's a shame
(Stuffed bowel)*

Botan region:

- *Throw it from a rock and it won't break. Throw it into water and it breaks.
(Paper)*
- *Hocus pocus. Son's longer than the father
(Donkey and horse)*
- *Bride in the evening, a reptile in the day
(Lamp)*
- *Yellower than gold, the poltroon's sh*t is the name of the lion
(Scorpion)*
- *Soldiers of the sky: took rivers' banks, no one stayed till morning
(Stars)*
- *I went to a gathering and asked the elderly: "Have you ever seen a bird
giving milk?"
(Bat)*

Riddles, in comparison with other oral literary forms of Kurdistan, demonstrate greater variety from region to region. As seen in the examples above, sometimes the answers and at times the puzzle changes. Regardless of this diversity, riddles must be protected and must not be disused. Each difference reflects peculiarity of the region. Like other literary forms, riddles play an important role in education, language and thought development and socialization.

6. Epigrams

In Botan and Behdinan regions epigrams are called *qese* and are told in a rhythmic manner. Generally they are told by two people in a form of a battle of words. Epigrams are often critical in nature. The way they are told in daily lives depends on the time. Their purpose is the same as idioms. Epigrams are told to describe, compare, criticize and amuse.

- *Your courage for what
Kill, son,
Partridge in a hunt
Was a shepherd for seven years
Was a herder for seventy years
That's why my chest whitens*
- *You call yourself a son
Coz you have two wives?
Did you know your old man's farm?
Did you fix the plough?*
- *Come slowly to my father's house
Open the door gently
If your mother-in-law makes any noise
Say that cats joined the game*
- *Crops are my labor
They used to ask: is Şinto a soldier?
It's a blind owl on the rocks
It sits next to the tandoor
Counts sand, plays with beads*

7. Autumn Songs (*Payizok* – *Pirepayizok**)

These are melancholic folk songs. Unlike *ghazal* kind of folk songs, they express gloomy feelings. They are sung only in the fall. When people who return from the highlands, they sing these songs. Fall is the beginning of the winter. Due to snow and harsh winter conditions, villagers are unable to leave their homes for five-six months. *Dengbêjs* sit together and take turns singing *payizok*. When these songs are sang no one dances *halay*¹⁰⁸. These are particularly popular in Hakkari region.¹⁰⁹ *Payizok* is not accompanied by musical instruments and is sung in a peculiar way as the voice comes out from the larynx in waves. Form of *payizok* has been greatly influenced by melancholy and anticipation of a long winter that comes together with autumn. In terms of topics they are very diverse. Adventures, love, affection etc. are among the themes. The most important feature of *payizok* is the argument. All our recordings bear this feature. In “Çemê Karê”¹¹⁰, a place known as place of the nomads, we gathered for our study folk songs more in the style of *payizok*. Autumn songs are generally sung by one person. In our study *dengbêjs* sung them more in a form of a battle of words.

Autumn songs are important as educational materials and also in terms of pedagogical methodology since they give meaning to the subjects and allow children to express themselves. Similarly to other oral literary forms, which are representative of Kurdish culture, *payizok* bears traits typical for Kurdish culture.

*Payizok*¹¹¹

Spring, spring close to the prey
Landlord calls out: the lady of the house
Here, in mourning, in all pain
No, honestly, it's a ruin, the black-eyed
I mean summer's labor
Autumn, autumn called out to me

¹⁰⁸ South-Eastern Anatolian folk dance [Translator's note].

¹⁰⁹ Çiftçi, 2012, p.43.

Payizok (payiz means autumn): Songs sung upon return to highlands. Since they are sung in autumn they are melancholic. Usually sung by the elderly, talk about another year that has passed. Another reason is harsh winter that will immobilize people in their homes.

¹¹⁰ Highlands on the slopes of Herekol mountain, Pervari, Siirt.

¹¹¹ İsmailê Koçer, Silopi, Şirnak 2014.

*This poor thing clanged to the branch of an oak tree
 This grieving house stays grief-stricken, father's also grief-stricken, the love
 between January and December
 Why don't you put roses and chamomile into your soul
 Why do you want this from me? Why do you want this from me?
 Summer's gone, with the fall of autumn, it's all gone in vain
 At first you didn't want anything from me, you gave no sign
 Spring's gone, summer's gone, what do you want from me in this autumn
 This autumn, come talk to me, hey, you the black-eyed.*

*Payizok*¹¹²

*Lift herup! Up! Let's see the bride
 Quickly! Lift herup! Let's see the beauty
 Hey, tear the cover... take off the cover from her...
 Hey, tear the cover... take it off your beauty...
 Oh, my beauty ...they'll make it rain, my dear
 Oh, went to the desert... the beauty went to the desert
 Oh, went to the desert... the beauty went to the desert
 Oh, on the bride's way... it's pouring rain on her
 No more sound of galloping bride's horse... bride's horse no longer comes, my
 dear
 No more sound of galloping bride's horse... bride's horse no longer comes, my
 dear
 Oh, our home's in nearly in the gutter... oh, she won't come close to our gutter
 Oh, our home's in nearly in the gutter... oh, she won't come close to our gutter
 Oh, the groom got stuck on the chimney, oh, is not gonna come... the grooms
 on the chimney, don't you come beauty...
 Oh, the groom got stuck on the chimney, oh, is not gonna come... the grooms
 on the chimney, don't you come beauty...
 Oh, the black-eyes is waiting... won't come waiting black-eyed beauty...
 Oh, the black-eyes is waiting... won't come waiting black-eyed beauty...
 Hey, oh, worker's house's on the hill, won't come there... worker's on the hill,
 oh your beauty won't come there...
 Hey, oh, worker's house's on the hill, won't come there... worker's on the hill,
 oh your beauty won't come there...*

112 Mihemedê Gindar, Ernebat-Cizre Botan bölgesi, 2014.

8. Epos

People know it as a long tale. According to our observations during fieldwork, they are usually told by *dengbêjs*. They gather big audiences and tell stories of war, heroism, love. Since eposes are long, telling them might sometimes take days. It can also be seen as a social event. How in other places a concert, movie screening are anticipated by art enthusiasts, the interest evoked in Kurdish society is similar. Listeners get carried away by the excitement of war and battles, remain under the spell of the protagonists, are entertained by the love stories, and sometimes are overwhelmed by pain and destiny. Kurdish epos usually starts with a story and is interrupted by folk songs. Among eposes popular among the people there are: : *Memê Alan/Mem and Zin, Siyabend and Xecê, Dervêşê Evdî, Ebdalê Zeynikê, Rustemê Zal, Ker û Kulik, Zembilfiroş, Dimdim, Filîtê Quto*, and *Bineuşa Narin*...From these, we have gathered ourselves *Siyabend and Xecê, Dervêşê Evdî, Ker and Kulik, Filîtê Quto, Zembilfiroş, Bineuşa Narin* and *Mirze Mihemed*.

*Dimdim*¹¹³

*Roars, nice roars,
It's the job of the Golden Claw Khan
That's the truth, there're no lies
There was a khan from Miquirî
He was wandering in the desert or along the streams
He had no residence
The khan arose from Kurdistan
Went to the Shah of Iran
To get goods and the khanate
The Khan was unknown orphan
Went to the Shah Abbas
Asked for the sword and the diamond
Khan, the orphan, went to the Shah of Iran
Asked him for a sword and belt
(...)*

¹¹³ Abstracts come from the beginning and the end of the Dimdim epos. Layout of the original is maintained. Dimdim is the name of a castle erected by the Golden Claw Khan. No force could destroy the fortress. The epos tells the story of a war between Kurdish Golden Claw Khan and Iranian Shah Abbas. It talks about Kurdish will to risk their lives, bravery of women, treason and Iranian tricks (Cindî H., 1962, 1985).

The war between The Golden Claw Khan and Shah lasted long. This time they fought till morning. The Shah realized that Golden Claw Khan and his son are not to be easily defeated. He had a poison prepared and sprinkled it over the battlefield. Towards the morning Golden Claw Khan and his son went to the poisoned battlefield. All of them burnt there. Shah and the soldiers were in a hurry to get to the Dimdim castle. Khan's wife looked through the window and what did she see? Shah and the soldiers were in a hurry to enter the castle. Then she turned to her daughter-in-law and said: "After the death of the Golden Claw Khan and his glorious son it would be disgrace for us to become Iranian." Shouting: "No! Something like that never happened and never will!" she run downstairs and set on fire gunpowder magazines. Explosions started there. The castle was destroyed from four sides and no one stayed alive. Only the Golden Claw Khan's daughter-in-law survived. The wind blew her scarf and took like a bird and landed in a Sunni village. The two of them are alive. Blood line of the Golden Claw Khan runs till this day thanks to the daughter-in-law.

Ker and Kulik¹¹⁴

(The Cripple and The Deaf)

(...)

The cripple tells the Deaf:

Mate, we haven't seen their daughters.

How can we go and bring Bêcan.

First we need to see the girls.

The Deaf screams out in the square

My heart is pounding

Eli Emerler should bring their daughters

Let the Cripple see the girls

And then go and bring Bêcan

Eli Emerler screams out in the square

He says: the Cripple son, you're right, you're a tyro

You're not in your right mind

We have a daughter who's Telî Revşen Hatun

She's a tiny pearl

When she drinks water you can see it going down her throat

¹¹⁴ Ker and Kulik are Werdê's sons. In order to marry a girl called Bêcan, brothers go through different fights and wars. The story talks about the role of women, horses and war in the society (Xecê Anne, Ovacık, Dersim, 2014).

*In the fountain of Paypur
Seventy dogs guard her
Each one of them is in good shape
In addition, there' also one white dog
If you like it, go there,
If you don't, go back.
(...)*

9. Curses¹¹⁵

Curses are important elements of oral literary culture of societies that have been oppressed and looked down on. Likewise, swearwords are elements of the oral culture that humiliate and oppress the wretched. Therefore analysis of the curses gives insight into psychological condition of the people and social situation. When we look at curses we notice miserable women, reproachful people, the deprived, and the marginalized.¹¹⁶ Like in the case of other oral literary products the research has not moved beyond collection of data. Socio-psychological study is yet to be carried out. As stated above, curses are the voice of the Kurdish society, and Kurdish women's subconscious in particular. They originate in Kurdish women's hearts and reverberate in children's ears. Both in curses that we managed to collect and that had been collected earlier, two features stand out. First of all, they are used/said more frequently by women/mothers. Secondly, they are told primarily for male children. In this sense curses shed light of the interaction between sexes.¹¹⁷ Women curse men. This is the reality of curses in Kurdish society that presented itself to us during our study.

C.G. Jung in "Psychology and Literature" explained the relationship between the artist and the artistic product. According to S. Freud artist creates artwork out of their own life experience in order to solve their problems. Some solutions found this way might be right since a work of art, just like neurosis, can help to cut psychical knots, which we call complexes.¹¹⁸ Jung, referring to Freud, believed that we can associate curses with neurosis. If we accept curses to be neurosis, then we can say that wording of the curses brings to light Kurdish

115 Curses quoted below were collected in Serhed, Botan, Dersim, Bingöl and Diyarbakır regions.

116 Kurdish curse dictionary (Demirhan, 2014).

117 Husband-wife.

118 Aka, 2010, p.40.

women's subconscious. Since Kurdish women are unable to stand against derogative treatment and violence of husbands or other oppressive powers, what they cannot say directly, they tell their children in the form of curses.¹¹⁹ From psychoanalytical perspective curses and lullabies are similar because they are means through which Kurdish women express their hidden ideas and thoughts. Curses cited below usually start with "heylê" and end with "-yo, -i." In Kurdish grammar these suffixes are used to address masculine gender. Therefore, it is clear that curses are told for the men. Sometimes men also curse. When we look at some curses presented below (see: 6,8,17,20,22,33) we can observe that women address the children, but they do in fact mean men. In these curses male children are used as a sort of scapegoat. Women do not target sons, they target their fathers. In curses and lullabies Kurdish women's subconscious can be thoroughly examined.

- 1) *May his throat be pierced*
- 2) *Have him wear black pants*
- 3) *May my germs get you*
- 4) *May he be stricken by electricity*
- 5) *May his eyes be blackened*
- 6) *May his bloodline end*
- 7) *May his house be torn down*
- 8) *May you lose your hair and fall between arms of your father*
- 9) *May you be torn into pieces*
- 10) *May you drown*
- 11) *May you bring the curse upon yourself*
- 12) *May you be taken by the river's flow*
- 13) *May your stomach get swollen*
- 14) *May your cheese turn into a stone*
- 15) *May your stomach bleed son*
- 16) *May your days become the darkest*
- 17) *May your end be not pleasant son*
- 18) *May your house be the house of a black crow*
- 19) *May you turn into ash*
- 20) *May your wishes remain always only wishes*
- 21) *May you get bitten by an angry wolf*
- 22) *May your wishes remain in you're a*s*
- 23) *May your bowels be pulled out through your throat*

119 All are males: brother-in-law, father-in-law, neighbor etc.

- 24) *May your nose becomes arthritic*
- 25) *May his belly darken*
- 26) *May he have cancer*
- 27) *May his eyes fall out*
- 28) *May his arm break*
- 29) *May his house collapse*
- 30) *May he be unwell*
- 31) *May he stay under the train and never come back*
- 32) *May he eat but not digest*
- 33) *May his life be like spring beetroot's*
- 34) *God damn you*
- 35) *May you miscarry*
- 36) *May God curse you*
- 37) *May your woman miscarry*
- 38) *May your house be set on fire*
- 39) *May you be struck by a lightning*
- 40) *May you not see your grandson*

Curses said for girls expose well Kurdish society's worldview and its reality. "May your stomach get swollen" is said to a girl. Social and religious factors underlie this phrase. In Kurdish society, following Islamic traditions, pre-marital sexual relations are sinful and forbidden. If a couple enters a secret relation it may result in pregnancy, for which, according to the social norms, all the responsibility and shame are attributed to the woman. When such news becomes public it brings upon the woman enormous shame. Social norms are imposed on women in particularly oppressive way. Such things do occur in Kurdish society and that is the reason why women would curse their daughters. The purpose is, in fact, to criticize the men, masculinity and social life and the daughter is used only as a tool. The purpose of older women is to give a warning and make girls face the realities of their society.

"May you lose your hair and fall between arms of your father" is a curse also told to girls. For Kurdish women long hair and braids are symbols of womanhood and beauty. Cutting hair of a woman is very meaningful in this society. Generally, women cut their hair to demonstrate disagreement and to mourn after significant events (death, murder or another tragedy).

It also exists among Yazidi women. Şirin İsmail Ali, member of Yazidi Free Democratic Movement Congress (TEVDA), talks about women from town of

Sinjar near Mosul¹²⁰ in Kurdistan: “Sisters or other women leave their hair and braids on the graves of the prematurely departed loved ones; they offer the most precious thing they have to those who through death were deprived of the beauties of life. Sometimes when a visitor from Europe comes to our cemeteries is astonished by the sight of hair and asks for the meaning. We tell them: ‘I haven’t seen in my life such a pain. I bury my entire beauty and attractiveness.’ Hair is very important for Yazidi Kurdish women. That’s why cutting hair and burying it is the beginning of a very long period of mourning for a woman.”¹²¹ It appears that hair cutting is one of the oldest traditions practiced by Kurdish women. Such a curse is very harsh on a girl, but like other curses directed at men, it also demonstrates feelings about men. By saying “(...) and fall between arms of your father,” the father is also included in the mourning.

10. Other oral literary genres

a) Games

Games, a part of oral literature, are rooted in chants. Children’s games differ depending on climate and physical conditions. Games played at home and outdoors are different. For both chants play an important role. Among games played at home there are: *kapavêtin* (bone throwing)¹²², *şexik*, *pêncok*, *heftok*,

120 Iraqi Kurdistan [Translator’s note].

121 Ali, 2011.

122 Tools used in the game are sheep and goats’ back legs’ bones. When goat or sheep is slaughtered children collect bones. Once they find the bones they clean them and place on a flat stone and further clean bones using another stone. When this is done, they pour lead into two cavities of the bone. Such a bone with two endings covered in lead is called the spotted bone. It is the most important bone in the game due to the whole procedure of its preparation. With this bone you can play many different games. The game in question here, is about destruction. Its name is also Kawxirê. 10-15 people can play it. Every player must have a bone because. First, it is played by a group of people, its size does not matter. Everyone plays individually. The players make a line and organize their bones vertically along it standing 1m away from the line. With the other bone they have they aim at the bone that’s in the ground and try to make it fall. They can do this as many times as the number of the bones they have. There is also another game very similar to this one. Its name is “bızdım-badım.” This game is played in a similar way. Players put their bones in a line and take one shot at their bone. In “bızdım-badım” game the bone that falls must be at least a foot away from the line. When the bone falls they step back a bit and say “bist û bade” and then they measure the distance between the line and the bone. If it’s one foot away the player wins the bone. If the player wins five times he is believed to be successful so friends award him with dried grapes and nuts. The game ends like that (İsmailê Koçer, Abdurrahmanê Koçer, Mihemedê Sipertî, İdris Torlak, Şirnak, Silopi, 2014).

ring game¹²³ and many others. Games played outdoors include: blind man's bluff, hide and seek, tossing shoes. During our research we noticed that in the winters children and adults spend time in the same place. Children play games with adults or observe their games. In other seasons, games are adjusted according to environmental conditions or modified or new games are invented. Below we present some chants told by children during games.

Games are played by groups of three or four children. One of the children is the leader, the other kids put their fingers in a way that they have to touch the ground and they open their hands. To start, for each finger of one hand they say:

Your clapsticks are straight, straight

Tail's up

Uncle's bone

Dyed partridge

*Came and sh*tted on this!*¹²⁴

Whichever finger the chant ends with, it must be hidden. It is repeated for all fingers; whose hand closes, must place their hand on the chest and continue with the other one. They repeat the same movements – after the hand is closed they place it on the chest. When all the children put their hands on their chests, the leader checks whose are hotter. Kids one by one take their hands off their chests and touch the face of the leader kid. The leader decides whose hands are the hottest.

Seek and hide (Veşartok-çavpirtinok) is played in Batman region with the chant below. A person closes their eyes and chants, while the others –two to ten children– hide.

¹²³ The ring game: During cold winter nights a crowd gathers in one house and separate into two groups. Each group (6 people) covers themselves with a blanket and one person from each group hides a ring among members of the group. Each person one by one bends over and turns away from the other group. Each person puts hands under the blanket and the ring changes hands. and is hidden in a pocket of one of the participants. The same selected person touches everybody in the group and suddenly they open their hand under the blanket. At that moment the ring is put into somebody's pocket. The one who gets the ring is afraid and slouches. Very often it is clear from the movements and the posture who got the ring. The person hiding the ring should select the most controlled, cold-blooded person so that the ring does not pass over to the other team. After the ring is hidden, the opposite team takes their turn to find the person who has the ring. If they find the person with the ring they win. The game continues for a few rounds. Losing team brings dried plums, grapes and eat it them together.

¹²⁴ Miraz Murat, Iğdır, 2014.

*"Oooooooooo
Hocus pocus
Taken hostage
Unlucky sultan of the bulbuls
What does he know, shameless?
Always knows the color of the water
The rose of the roses
Is better than red poppies
Hide yourself
Look, here I came¹²⁵*

b) Anecdotes

Anecdotes usually draw on social life and are told for amusement. In many regions people who tell anecdotes are very famous. They occupy prominent place in Kurdish oral literature. Anecdotes, among other names, are also called "empty talk" and contain a lot of slang expressions.

"A man was going to get married one day, but he didn't know what he should so. He was told: 'When there's time for the marriage ceremony, just repeat whatever the Imam says.' He said 'OK' and went to Imam.

Imam: Blah blah person's son.

The man: Blah blah person's son.

Imam: Do you know who you are?

The man: Do you know who you are?

Imam: Dude, I'm the Imam, know your place!

The man: I'm the imam, know your place!

Imam: I'll marry you to a woman.

The man: I'll marry you to a woman.

Imam stood up and said: "Damn you" and stood up the man and said "Damn you."¹²⁶

c) Memoir/Legend

In some periodicals tales (chirok) are called memoirs or adventures, but this terminology is inaccurate since memoirs' authors are known. Moreover in terms of topic and subject they are different from tales. There is a great deal of terminological confusion in naming genres. which needs to be addressed (Alakom, 1994, p.7-8). Memoir-adventures are written by the person who ex-

¹²⁵ Abide Özdemir, Batman, 2014.

¹²⁶ Kalê Şinoyi, Van, Gürpınar, Gola Bozo, 2014.

perienced events in the plot or by a person who saw the events or knows the person who had experienced them. Adventures are circulating in different versions. With time they might turn into tales. In every region one may find memoir-adventure narratives. Weird events, comic stories, war and struggles are some of the topics. In general, they are told as anecdotes.

d) Spring songs (Heyranok/Dilok)

Heyranok is one of the melodic genres of oral literature usually performed in the spring. They are inspired by love and affection. The coming of spring excites the youth and with their first spring loves they start to sing love songs. *Dilok* is also a melodic oral literary product. One may find *dilok* sung in the workplaces and daily life. These songs are about love, relations between a bride and groom, and about work. They are sung to entertain and to give moral support. In Botan region all farm laborers sing *diloks* while working. These songs cheer them up and help to work at a faster pace. *Dilok* is sung in turns.

e) Logical puzzles¹²⁷

Logical puzzles come along riddles, word puzzles and they are told in every region. Usually they are used by the elderly but also children are familiar with some depending on their knowledge and understanding. During work, holiday or in the evenings people ask each other logical puzzles.

- *A sheep, wolf and grass are next to each other. They need to be moved to the other side of the river. How can it be done without letting them eat each other?*

(Solution: First the sheep should be taken to the other and the owner shall return. Secondly the grass should be taken and sheep taken back. Then, the wolf should be taken. At last the sheep should be taken again. This way they will not harm one another.)

- *There were three people, their spouses and one horse. They came to the bank of a stream. No one trusted one another. They did not dare to leave their spouses with the others. How can they pass to the other side?*

(Solution: First three women get on the horse and cross to the other side. Then two of them stay and one goes back to her husband and three men get on the horse. Two men stay with their wives and the third one goes back to take his wife.)

¹²⁷ Faruk Köstekçi, Bitlis, Adilcevaz, YukarıSüphanvillage, 2014.

- *There are three mules. One eats people, one eats saddles and the third one eats mules. You must tie these animals one behind the other so that one man can hold the reins and travel. How will you tie them?*

(Solution: The mule that eats mules must be the first one and you'll give the reins to the person. The mule that eats people must be the last one and the one that eats saddle must be in the middle. Tie three saddles to this one and go like that.)

11. Women's oral literature: Lullabies

Lullabies are quatrains rhythmically told to help children sleep. People call them *lorik* or *lori*. Lullabies play a significant role in teaching and learning one's mother tongue. The child first recognizes and learns mother's voice. Through lullabies children learn new words and establish relation with the world. They also become familiar with characteristic features of the society and cultural heritage is passed down to them.¹²⁸ Lullaby, when sung, is each time re-invented by the teller. Psychoanalytical studies of lullabies suggest that they are sung not just to help the child sleep.¹²⁹ A mother while singing a lullaby contributes to it her own feelings and thus re-creates it. As a result, a mother becomes a kind of an artist since she re-invents the lullaby and passes it on. To reformulate the lullaby mother uses her own life experiences.

As a consequence of Freud and Jung's psychoanalyst ideas, literature and here, lullabies, are seen as a kind of neurosis. According to this view, lullabies appear to have a different purpose. They are the way a mother tells the child her subconscious feelings. A mother, who has no one to share her problems and internalized feelings with, shares them through a lullaby with her child.

We shall try to evaluate collected lullabies from this perspective. Although they are just lullabies told by Kurdish mothers to their children, they can be analyzed from psychoanalyst perspective.

Serhed region¹³⁰

- *Hush, hush, hush, hush*
Hush my honey, hush my sonny boy
Sleep my honey boy
Grow pretty, pretty

¹²⁸ Toker, 2011, p. 27.

¹²⁹ Aka, 2010.

¹³⁰ Werdek Civelek, Faraşin 2014

*Sleep my honey boy
Grow pretty, pretty*

- *Hush, hush, my honey hush
Hush, hush, my sweetie hush
My beloved tall like a cypress
My black-eyed, why are you crying?
Hush my sonny boy, hush
Sleep till the morning
Hush, hush, baby boy hush
Hush, hush my sweetie hush*
- *Night's coming, place to stay's far
Hush, hush my sweetie hush*
- *Sonny boy, sonny boy
I'm an angry wolf
I'm miserable
I'm a prisoner
Sonny boy, sonny boy, oh sonny boy*

Behdinan region:

- *Cibri sonny boy, hush, hush
Little cibri tells the big cibri
Go you crazy kid, I said they're gone
Oh, I've gone like a black eagle, honestly I don't
I wish I knew your home
I'd come on foot, hush, hush¹³¹*
- *I'll hold hand of Hekeryan Mirî's son, Cembeli
I'll bring Berçelan to the highlands
She'll respect me and entertain
Oh, hush, hush my Cembeli, hush
Cembelie of the house, don't cry sonny boy
Hush, don't break your poor mama's heart
Hush, your tears make mama sad
Mother-in-law will come and rock you herself*

¹³¹ Werdek Civelek, Faraşin, 2014.

Cibri: Name of one of the epic heroes from Binevşa Narin-Cembeliyê Mîrê Hekaryan.

*Your good poor mama won't be here
She won't rock her Cembeli's cradle
Oh, hush, hush my Cembeli, hush...*¹³²

When Binevşa Narîn got a baby, she named it Cembelî after her love. Menekşe when singing her child lullabies reveals her hidden feelings. In the lullaby she portrays Bey of Hakkârî Cembelî and passes onto child her expectations of Cembelî.¹³³

Narin Menekşe's lullaby spread among women in Kurdistan and eventually has become the lullaby of Kurdistan. Kurdish mothers sing Cembelî lullaby. In some regions the name Cembelî was changed into Cibrî. Through this lullaby Kurdish mothers have their children listen about their problems, sorrows and pains. This behavior illustrates the role and mission women have been given in the society. In other words it shows us patriarchal character of the society.¹³⁴ In a patriarchal society women are always restrained and space for women to express themselves freely is limited.

C. CHILDREN'S ORAL LITERATURE OF KURDISTAN

In the view of the people interviewed for this study nursery rhymes are children's oral literary products. Adults, embarrassed due to their age, did not tell us any nursery rhymes. They would say: "Sir, this is for kids." We were told what interviewees remember from their own childhoods; what they used to say when they played. In their playtime they used to chant nursery rhymes about life, nature and animals.

Children are the ones who create and use nursery rhymes in their games. This is the origin of children's literature. Body of research in this area supports our findings with regard to Kurdish oral literature.¹³⁵ In the course of our study

¹³² An abstract from "Binevşa Narin- Cembeliyê Mirê Hekaryan" epos, Nadiye Ana, Hakkari, 2014.

¹³³ From Binevşa Narin-Cembeli Mirê Hekaryan epos: "She got up and put her son into the cradle and in the evening run away with Hekari Mirî's son. From the mountains they came to Tiyarê and from there to Hekari and finally to the highlands of Berçelan. Got bored of the father and did not stay also in Hakkari." Told by *dengbêj* Kemal Şimşek (Hakkari, center, 2014).

¹³⁴ In a patriarchal society there exists gender ideology and women are second-class citizens. According to this ideology men occupy advantageous position in the society. In the women-men relations, men are depositors of authority. See: Ökten, 2009.

¹³⁵ According to Bortav there are following types of nursery rhymes:
1. Tale nursery rhymes
2. Game nursery rhymes

we witnessed moments of children's oral literary improvisations. Interviewees recounted that in the past children used to chant nursery rhymes among themselves about social life, nature and animals.

For instance, in Serhed region some children used to sing a rhyme about "Sunlight and Shadow. "To change the weather i.e. make it cooler or warmer, they would change some words and sing "Sunlight and Shadow" the following way:

Hey, sunlight, go away, your son's gone mad
Hey, shadow come out, your daughter's gone mad
Hey, sunlight, go away, your son's gone mad
*Hey, shadow come out, your daughter's gone mad*¹³⁶

While chanting this nursery rhyme children are outdoors. Daily life is the source of this rhyme.

In the same way they sing a rhyme for a ladybug. When a ladybug sits on a child's finger, in order to guess or learn results of a family matter, they say two words taking turns. Words that are said when ladybug flies are believed to come true. For instance, if there is a pregnant woman in a child's family, children try to guess sex of the child according to ladybug's take off. When the ladybug is on the finger they say:

"Girl boy
Girl boy
Girl boy
*Girl boy"*¹³⁷

On the plains the relationship with ladybugs is different as children ask a ladybug to grant a wish. When making a wish children sing or chant it. If the

3. Ritual nursery rhymes

4. Independent word games

These four types of nursery rhymes are invaluable from the perspective of learning a mother tongue since they build vocabulary. Taking into account interaction among children, nursery rhymes in the games change and develop the most. It can be said that changes and reinventions a rhyme undergoes during playtime contribute to the development of children's lexis. Nursery rhymes can be re-created based on the inspiration coming from current events. In other words, children not only repeat, but also create new rhymes. Changes are influenced by local dialects, popular cartoon characters or contemporary cultural fashions. These nursery rhymes can be counted as first literary products created by children (Toker, 2011).

136 Xwişka Pembe, Ağrı, 2014.

137 Hakan Şahini, Ağrı, 2014.

ladybug flies quickly, they believe the wish will come true. In Diyarbakır they tell to the ladybug:

*"Grandpa Grandma
Bring us the robe
Take henna in your hand
Seal your son's hat cap."*

In Batman in one village we heard children saying "*selîma*" for a ladybug:

"Selîma bring me a pair of shoes." ¹³⁸

In Cizre they say the following:

*"Ladybug, ladybug,
Where's dad's house" ¹³⁹*

Direction where the ladybug flies after these words is where the house is located.

Although in some games children refer to animals, they also use word groups. In the following example, during a game one of the children wanted to defeat the opponent or to surprise them. The first child, rhythmically chanting, asks the second to start the game::

*"Child 1: Hey, say twenty for me!
Child 2: Twenty!
Child 1: I peed into your ear, is it OK?
Child 2:... " ¹⁴⁰*

On the slopes of Süphan Mountain we heard a nursery rhyme from a woman that goes as follows:

*"O mo kara do
Sîne mîne bi bando,
Teke tûka şeke şûka ker bando." ¹⁴¹*

In the game involving this chant two or three children sit in a circle next to each other. The game is initiated by one of the kids. When the rhyme starts children start clapping their hands and when it ends they hide their hands behind. The child who pulls back their hands the fastest with the last word

¹³⁸ Ronya Bewran, Diyarbakır, 2014.

¹³⁹ Sümeyye Gezici, Batman, 2014.

¹⁴⁰ Cûdî Seçen, Murad Sadak, Cizre, 2014.

¹⁴¹ Sevgül Akkuş, Bitlis, Adilcevaz, 2014.

of the rhyme wins the right to continue the game. They are other games accompanied by rhymes. In one of them 3-4 or 4-5 children sit together and start the game. One of them takes the lead and initiates the game with the following words:

*"A grandma's coming downhill
Her hair is messy
Her dress is torn and wooly
Her hands are cracked
There are in her cuffs
A snake, a mouse, a worm and an insect
Sh*t, trots, horsesh*t and the dung
Baaaaang!"¹⁴²*

With the word "baaaaang" children close their mouth. The last one to cover their mouth hears: "May all the things from grandma's cuffs get into loser's mouth." The game continues and the list of "grandma's things" is extended. When all the children take their turn the game ends.

There are also chants that contain swearwords and sarcasm. These are said in a rhythmic manner in order to shame unpopular or naughty children or the ones who do not obey rules and values shared by others. The chant below addresses a child who does not want to share its things (food, drinks), in fact it is supposed to criticize stinginess.

*"Son of a bitch
In the field during harvest
Would not eat enough hay
Would not give to the donkey."¹⁴³*

We can state, based on these examples, that there exists oral literature of Kurdish children. There is a need for further fieldwork and more sources to enrich and provide continuity for Kurdish children's oral literature. Creation of Kurdish children's literature is a precondition for them to start using mother tongue. In addition, written literature and education in mother tongue will strengthen children's literature. According to different research results, nursery rhymes contribute to the progress in education in the mother tongue.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Feridun Birgöl, Ağrı, 2015.

¹⁴³ Rohat Asê, Ağrı, 2014.

¹⁴⁴ Toker, 2011.

D. THE FOX: HERO OF KURDISH TALES

In children's literature around the world there are many animal heroes; for example, a bear, a rabbit, a fox, a wolf etc. Like in world-famous "Fables of La Fontaine and Aesop"¹⁴⁵ animals were attributed specific characteristics. The same is valid for Kurdish children's oral literature. Most of the oral literary products collected during our fieldwork are mostly fables and tales.¹⁴⁶ Among all the animal heroes the most common one is the fox. Tales about the fox talk about his duplicity, treachery, deception.

In the past Kurds faced duplicity, treachery, deception and similar treatment creating insecurity which bore important results. Powers that interacted with Kurds secured only their own gains. Kurds and nature have always been under attack and in these attacks the states and other actors tried different methods. Qazî Muhammad in his testament wrote about Kurdistan Republic of Mahabad which was destroyed by treachery and deceit:

"I did not make a promise to 'leave you at mercy of heartless enemies.' Giving my word I thought about the past, our ancestors captured and killed by the Iranians. They were always on my mind and I never trusted the Iranians. However, before returning here (Mahabad), Kurds, Iranians and the Shah in their letters gave their word that the Shah had no bad intentions and that not a single drop of blood would be spilled in Kurdistan. Now you can see with your own eyes how they kept their word. If the clan elders had not betrayed us and had not sold themselves to the Iranian government, this would not have happened to us and our state. My advice and last will is for you to educate your children. Apart from education, we lack nothing in comparison with other nations. Study so we are not left behind other nations. Knowledge is the best weapon against our enemies."¹⁴⁷

In 1938 Seyid Riza,¹⁴⁸ the general of Dersim Rebellion, described an example of lies and deceit against the Kurds. İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil, a man responsible for security in Malatya, in his memoirs recounts Seyid Riza's words about the Turkish state:

*"Dishonorable and deceitful government,
I could not cope with your frauds and deceptions, it pestered me. I did not bow my head before you, and may it be your nuisance."*

¹⁴⁵ Erkan, 2014.

¹⁴⁶ In Kurdish for a fable terms Çîrok, hikayat are used. In this book we use the term fable.

¹⁴⁷ From Qazi Muhammad's testament (Qazî Mihemed, 2013).

¹⁴⁸ Xidîr, 2012.

In "The Journal of American Folklore" W.R. Bascom in an article titled "Four Functions of Folklore" he answered the question whether the people who listen to a folkloric product are in any way influenced or not and whether it contributes anything to their lives. In Bascom's view, folklore is not just aimed at entertainment. Amusement is an important element of folklore; however, today we cannot accept this as an answer. There is clearly a deeper meaning to the laughter.¹⁴⁹ Taking this into account, the need to further investigate and analyze Kurdish oral literature is apparent. Frequent presence of the fox in Kurdish presents a subject for further studies. In fact, Kurdish history is passed onto children through tales and sometimes adults can learn something too.

Departing from Bascom's views and the reality of Kurdish society, the meaning of tales about the fox is much more than just amusement. Through the fox, tales show the dominant force as lying and deceiving. Kurdish mothers and fathers teach their children what deception, duplicity and treachery lead to on the example of the fox. Children who listen to these tales may laugh, but in fact they try to understand and question these matters. In the stories, critique and questions about the past go through a filter. This perspective on fox tales in Kurdish oral literary culture leads to a broad psychoanalytical study.

E. GENDER IN ORAL LITERATURE

Below we will examine Kurdish oral literature in the context of gender. Firstly, we will look at women heroes' presence in the oral literature. Secondly, we will focus on women's role in oral literary transmission.

a) Women in oral literature

Women are undoubtedly one of the most prominent subjects in Kurdish tales. When we thoroughly analyze the tales, we can see that Kurdish society always gave a lot of respect and value to women in men-women relations. On the other hand, all the women were not placed in the same basket, they had made a distinction between good and bad women in accordance with social norms of the time. Faces of good women were white and of bad were black. Women's "badness" or "goodness" was measured according to their usefulness for the society, family and children and it would also delineate limits of their freedom. At the end of a tale good women achieve good results, free themselves from oppression, embrace freedom and find salvation. Women's emancipation is a prominent topic of Kurdish tales. Every tale ends with all their wishes coming

¹⁴⁹ Aka, 2010, p.38.

true when women unite with their loved ones and stay happy together. Bad women are usually punished and killed at the end of the story. We can say that righteousness and justice are always present in each Kurdish tale.¹⁵⁰

According to Alakom's conclusions, the role of Kurdish women in oral literary narrative and particularly in tales' narrative is clearly visible. In many oral literary genres including eposes, tales, memoir-adventures, ballads and folk songs women are usually the main protagonist. In these genres women are given respect and value. In eposes such as *Memê Alan*, *Siyabend û Xecê*, *Ker û Kulik*, *Bineuşa Narîn- Cembelî Mîrê Hekaryan*, *Mem û Eyşe*, *Zembîlfiroş*, *Sêva Hecî*, *Menşa Eliyê Selîm Axa*, *Dimdim*, *Filitê Quto*, *Bişarê Çeto*, women's courage and resistance are the subject matter.

In *Ker û Kulik* epos, women's prominent role comes to the fore with Werdê and Becan. Werdê's courage and Becan's decisiveness are powers characteristic of Werdê and Becan. Women's courage can be seen in Kurdish oral literature through such eposes as *Ker û Kulik* and *Dimdim*. In these eposes women demonstrate not only courage but also strong determination. In *Ker û Kulik* Werdê who wants to marry Silêman despite attacks and bad reactions beats her father and breaks his head. Later, she marries Silêman. In *Dimdim* women present their self-confidence. Iranian Shah through deception and treachery kills the Golden Claw Khan and his sons and moves against the Dimdim fortress. Wife of the Khan and his daughter-in-law blow up the entire fortress. They refuse to surrender both the fortress and themselves to the Iranian Shah.

b) Women's influence on oral literature

In nationalist ideology and practice women have the responsibility to "delineate limits of national culture, to protect, preserve and pass it down to new generations." Based on that, gender roles place them at home and both in biological and cultural terms identify with motherhood. At the beginning of the 20th century, women's gender roles, responsibilities and place in the family were core matters of anti-colonial struggles and modernizing nation building. Family and domestic sphere became seen as important spaces for new political project and subordinated to new social regimes of discipline. Similarly, family and domestic sphere become the space where oppressed communities could continue to exist, resist and support each other.¹⁵¹ Apart from women's role in this sphere, we will evaluate women's role in literature

¹⁵⁰ See: Alakom, 1994.

¹⁵¹ Çağlayan, 2014 p. 136.

in two areas. Firstly, women create themselves, and secondly as a result of their place in societal life they take on or are assigned the role of a narrator.

In terms of the first area, framework is designed by women. A woman creates oral literary forms within that framework and uses them in daily life. Just like with lullabies and curses, women have created for themselves niche specific to themselves. Men's oppression and prohibition are the reasons why this space is so limited. Women themselves have created access to this area. They unwind themselves through lullabies and curses. Through their creativity women also question artistry. It is also possible to happen in different spheres. Due to male dominance women's role in art cannot come to light. Women tell and use a lot of oral literary products, for example songs, riddles, poems, tales, eposes and others. As already mentioned above, women's participation is very limited. In some regions repeating oral literary products is believed to be a sin. According to such religious worldview, a woman must not tell an epos or sing ballades/folk songs. She is allowed to sing lullabies and blessingsto the baby. She may sing while cooking, baking and doing the dishes or she can hum while milking animals.

As to women's position in the social sphere, during our fieldwork we encountered the following situation: in villages in the past, water was not connected to each household. There used to be one fountain in each neighborhood. This fountain used to be one of the main places of socialization along with harvest, washing the wool, weddings, holidays, mourning and late night visits. Women would got to the fountain, depending on their needs, three to four times a day. Sometimes they would carry water in jugs or do the dishes. Women would come together around the spring and chat. Meetings by the fountain were the most important opportunity to socialize and to discuss daily matters of the village. They would share information, ask questions, exchange advice. Groups by the spring were organized according to age. Married women with children would sit elsewhere and single women elsewhere. The fact that young women formed a separate group attracted men's attention. As a result men and women had an opportunity to see each other and develop affection. This would lead to a wedding and the cycle would start anew. However, connection of water to every house disrupted this form of socialization. Regardless of how much easier their lives became with water at home, women underline the fact that this change did not make them that happy. They reveal that now "everybody is closed off at home and talks to no one."

Before Kurds converted to Islam, they were Zoroastrians and Yazidi. With the conversion many customs and traditions related to women were abandoned.

Some of the researches attribute this to Mevlana Xalid religious order. Naqsh-bandi order prohibited women from singing songs. According to sharia law, it is prohibited for men and women to sit together and sing songs. Therefore, like in many other places, women are not present in significant numbers at the meetings with *dengbêj*. Meyremxan and Ayşe Şan face a lot of difficulties on their path as *dengbêjs*. Interestingly, Fatma İsa and Aslika Qadır who are Yezidis, Gula Bavfile and Pêroya Têxûtê who are Armenians, have occupied leading positions among minstrels. However, despite all these obstacles Kurdish women did not give up on being *dengbêjs*. Some of the old habits exist to this day. In nomadic Kurdish communities, the tent during evening visits used to be separated by a curtain. Women and men were seated in different places and could not see each other.¹⁵²

Women's participation in oral literature was perceived as immoral and sinful and this attitude has become a norm in Kurdish society. Thus women cannot openly pursue arts. There are in Kurdish society women who have gained recognition in oral literature and can participate in art unbothered. These women are well known *dengbêj* and they are accepted by the society. During our research we have noticed few blueprints for women's place in social life. In our view women recognized as *dengbêjs* could easily present their skills as storytellers. Women politically supportive of Kurdish Political Movement¹⁵³ could also freely express themselves through art. However, those women who due to religious and social norms remain under the yoke of religion cannot freely pursue arts and were unable to meet with us. For these women, as already mentioned, lullabies and curses are the only mode of artistic expression. They also have limited opportunity to socialize. In conversations, work, while having tea or having the table set, we could always see only men. Sometimes men even spoke on behalf of women and did not allow them to say anything.

"No, a woman cannot tell a story!

A woman doesn't know how to tell anything!

She forgot, must have!

Those who have work, are busy, with food and stuff!"

We were told these and other things. These way women are ignored by man on a social platform. Cemîla Celîlin Yerevan Radio talks about this problem:

"I want to say something here. In my father's times, in my times too, it was hard to find a woman to sing songs on the radio. Among Kurds there were

¹⁵² Çiftçi, 2014 p. 55.

¹⁵³ Çakır, 2014.

*many women with beautiful voices, they sang songs very well. They did sing around me, during women's gatherings but most of them would not come to the studio, they didn't want their voices to be recorded. One day a girl named Gulizer came to the radio, sang few songs and we recorded her. Her voice was beautiful and she also sang Kurdish songs without any problems. Then she got married. Gulizer's songs were played on the radio because people asked for her a lot. However, according to what I was told, until she died her husband would insult her each time her songs were played on the radio. Men's oppression of Kurdish women continues."*¹⁵⁴

In politically mature regions we did not encounter such problems. In those regions there was space for women where they were able to freely and easily express themselves. Women, like men, shared with us their skills. In these regions women come more to the fore. For instance, they occupy prominent positions in leadership and executive of organizations, local governments and other areas.

F. CULTURAL INTERACTIONS AND ASSIMILATION IN ORAL LITERATURE

a) Aesop fables and Children's Literature of Kurdistan

Cultural diffusion among civilizations has been continuing since time immemorial. Regardless of geographical distance, cultures enrich one another. For instance Aesop's tales and tales of Saadi Shirazi, an Iranian, bear similarity.¹⁵⁵ It is known that Shirazi traveled around Kurdistan before he wrote *Gulistan*. On the other hand, cultural borrowings between Kurdish and Farsi cultures are already very well documented. Since *Gulistan* was translated into dozens of languages and it must have been translated into Kurdish. A research related to the topic suggests that Aesop must have travelled around Mesopotamia.

Aisophos, (Aesop) a Greek who lived in the 6th century B.C.E. is known as the first fable writer in world's history. According to recent research Aesop fables' roots reach Indian, Mesopotamian, Hebrew and Phoenician traditions.¹⁵⁶ If there ever is a study done concerning Kurdish literature, it will bring to light interactions of the Kurds with other civilizations of the world. In our research we have encountered traces of such cultural interactions and we are not alone to have arrived at such conclusions (See: Derdiyok, 2010, Yilmaz, 2011). Kurdish literature might have been the source for some of the Shiraz's and

¹⁵⁴ Celil, 2011.

¹⁵⁵ Celil, 2011.

¹⁵⁶ Yilmaz, 2011.

Aesop's fables. In Bismil county of Diyarbakır we have recorded a tale related to this matter. "The Fox and the Stork" is known to be Aesop's fable. However, the same tale is told among Kurds. So a question arises whether "The Fox and the Stork" isn't originally a Kurdish tale. Without doubt there is a need for a thorough investigation of the issue.

The Fox and the Stork¹⁵⁷

The fox and stork liked each other. One day the stork told the fox:

Fox, you're a beautiful fox, you're renowned. I'd like to offer you something. One evening I'd like you to be my guest. I'll cook for you a delicious dinner. You'll eat it with pleasure. When you taste it, you'll be full. When the stork said it like this, the fox couldn't believe it. He started waiting for stork's invitation.

Fox: Hmm, I wonder, when will the stork invite me to dinner?

One day the stork gave a sign.

Stork: Fox!

Fox: Hah!

Stork: Fox, tonight you're my guest.

Fox: When am I invited?

Stork: You're invited before the evening. I'll have finished cooking for you just before the evening.

The fox didn't believe it would happen that evening.

The Fox and the Stork¹⁵⁸

No one should hurt anybody,
But if one misbehaved to somebody,
Shall get what's coming.

That's the moral of this story!

First the fox invited home supposedly
for a feast.

Our haji father, in a big marble pot on
the pastures was offered soup.

Our stork is very hungry, but what
shall he do?

Can't even get a single sip of the soup.

The other one called the fox. In return
made a big ball of dough and served it
in a long-necked bottle.

The stork put his beak in and easily got
the food to get full. Let's go, the guest
is dying from hunger. The fox's licking
the bottle's neck for nothing.

Our haji father told him: "one should
bear the consequences of their deeds."

When the evening came the fox went towards stork's house. When the stork saw the fox coming he dug a hole in the ground. He made the whole according to his own size, fox's mouth, let alone tongue would not fit in.

Stork: Fox, my brother, welcome! I've been preparing for your visit since the morning. Come, let's go to get the food, it's ready. When they got to the food, the fox put his tongue out, but whatever he did, he could not taste it. Whatever he

157 Hecî Şerîfê Ferqîni, Diyarbakır, Bismil, 2014

158 Derviş Cemaloğlu, 2014, p. 478.

tried doing, he could not solve the problem. The stork with his beak could reach the food and got full.

Stork: Fox!

Fox: Hah!

Stork: Bon appetite, brother. Are you full yet?

Fox: Yes, mightily. Thank you. Tomorrow you're my guest.

Stork: I'm smart. The fox will make the food and I'll peck and get full again.

The fox said to himself: I'm the fox. Just wait and see how deceptive and smart I am.

In the evening the fox made a thick soup. At the door there as a flat rock. He spilled the soup on it. "Welcome, brother stork." Both of them went to the food. The stork tried hard, but no matter what he did his beak was empty, he could not catch anything. The fox licked and ate everything.

Fox: Stork, brother, did you get full?

Stork: Yes, I did!

What goes around, comes around.

b) Grandma's Keloğlu and Keloğlan

"Grandma's Keloğlu" is a story told by Kurdish people. Protagonist of a story titled "Keloğlan" is hard-working, bold and poor. He lives with his mother. The same tale is known in Turkish literature under title "Keloğlan" and is told in Turkish. Most of the children in Northern Kurdistan think that Keloğlan's tale comes from Turkish literature. Moreover, films,¹⁵⁹ cartoons,¹⁶⁰ and stories¹⁶¹ about Keloğlan were made and continue to be made in Turkish. As a result, Kurdish children see Keloğlan as a Turkish character. This situation could be interpreted as a case of cultural diffusion. However, many Kurdish oral cultural products have been translated into Turkish by the Turkish state, appropriated as Turkish literature and presented to the Kurdish society. Kurdish children, educated in Turkish, for years were being familiarized with Kurdish tales, but in Turkish.

159 Rüştü Asyalı (b.1947, Ankara, Turkish theater and cinema actor) played the lead role in Keloğlan films. Film titles:

1. Keloğlan among us, 1971.
2. Keloğlan and Cankız, 1972.
3. Keloğlan in charge, 1975.
4. I'm a poor Keloğlan 1976.

See: https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/R%C3%BC%C5%9Ft%C3%BC_Asy%C4%B1

160 Keloğlan cartoon was broadcasted by TRT. 2009-2013 107 episodes were broadcasted.

161 Keloğlan Tales, Timaş Yayınları, İstanbul.

"Grandma's Keloğlu" story¹⁶²

(...)

When emir's wounds healed, he said: "I'll give him such a condition that he'll not get away."

He called again our Keloğlu. Servants brought him right away to the emir. This time emir asked for something he could not do: "Go, bring my father's hat."

Emir's father had died few years before so he planned that whichever hat Keloğlu would bring, he would say it wasn't his father's and would chop Keloğlu's head off. Then he would make his wish come true and marry Reqk.

Keloğlu figured out what the emir had in mind. He knew there was no end to this, that the emir would always find something else and eventually cut his head off.

Again, crying and mourning he went to Reqk. She told him: "My dear Keloğlu, don't you worry. Go that small window you always do, below you'll see a cave. This small window will take you to the dead-men's world. Go and meet emir's father. And ask him where his hat is. He'll tell you. Tell him about our problems with his son and he'll show you the way." The next day our Keloğlu went to the window described by Reqk. He saw a cave and entered. After a long and dark way, he saw the other world. It was the dead-men's world. Full of grassland and water.

(...)

c) The reality of assimilation and cultural genocide under the name of change

Kurdish culture has been translated into Turkish and used in the cinema, music, literature and other cultural and art fields. Kurdish culture became part of the Turkish one. The state three times collected and translated folk songs. In 1926 delegation from Daru'l Elhan collected 250 songs in Antep, Adana and Urfa. In 1938 teachers from the Ministry of Education and Ankara State Theater collected 491 songs in Malatya, Diyarbakır, Urfa, Maraş, Adıyaman and Seyhan. Another research was carried out in 1967 by TRT resulting in a collection of 1778 songs. The latest research was done by National Folklore Magazine published by the Ministry of Culture. In 1976 300 songs were collected and translated into Turkish. Collecting songs and notes is of course

¹⁶² By Miradî Gundikî, Botan region, village of Melî.

important. However, gathered songs are performed by Kurdish *dengbêj* in Turkish. *Keça Kurd* was the first recorded piece and translated into Turkish as *Turkmen's Daughter*. The same happened with *Buka Kurda*, which was titled *Turkmen's Bride*. Some artists cannot stop themselves and in the *Buka Kurda* part they sing stronger and clap. First Kurdish works were recorded in Turkish by such artists as Celal Güzelses, Mukim Tahir, Kel Hamza and Cemil Cankat. Over time Mahmut Güzelgöz, Kazancı Bedih, Nuri Sesigüzel, İbrahim Tatlıses, Burhan Çaçan, and İzzet Altınmeşe also sung Kurdish songs as Turkish. Celal Güzelses was considered to be the most successful. Mustafa Kemal¹⁶³ praised him as “the bulbul of the East.” After Güzelses, Muzafer Sarısözen translated Kurdish songs into Turkish and sung them accompanied by a komuz¹⁶⁴, a national instrument of the Turks according to Ziya Gökalp¹⁶⁵. Song *Coktar* sung for years by Tahsin Taha was translated by Mehmet Özbek and named *White Rose, Red Rose*.

As already mentioned Turkish-Kurdish cultural interaction cannot be seen as intercultural diffusion. Within the scope of assimilationist project and state ideology what happened was cultural change and negligence. State's policy to change folkloric products lasted fifty years. In that time a lot of people, either following state's policies or on their own accord, appropriated Kurdish, Armenian or other cultural products and used to their own benefit. To the extent that dozens of songs of Hesên Zîrek, a Kurdish artist, were translated.¹⁶⁶ In 1946 he wrote a requiem for Kurdistan Republic of Mahabad titled *Ey Nîştîman*. Requiem's melody was adopted for a Turkish song *Look at Ankara's Rock* (Ankara'nın Taşına Bak) without any indication of the source. Many songs of Hesên Zîrek (like *Yallah, driver*) were taken without citing the source.

(...)

Oh, beloved nation

Oh, Kurds, oh, lion-hearted

Oh, motherland, oh, motherland

Pure land, the motherland of Kurds

From the depth of my heart I rebel for you

¹⁶³ Atatürk [Translator's note].

¹⁶⁴ String instrument [Translator's note].

¹⁶⁵ Ziya Gökalp (1876-1925); Turkish sociologist, ideologist of Turkish nationalism [Translator's note].

¹⁶⁶ An artist from the South of Kurdistan. Born in 1921 in Bikan. Recorded songs for Baghdad radio. In 1966 he wrote a book titled “Çirîkey Kurdistan.” He died in 1972 but songs he left behind are timeless. (Xulamî, 2013).

For the success of the land of Kurdistan

(...)Hesen Zîrek

The following song, Ez ê Herim Welatê Xwe, was also sung by Armenians:¹⁶⁷

Don't cry comrades, I'll go to my motherland

I won't stay long, I'll go to my motherland

It's not the right place for me, there are many troubles and sorrows here

Being a foreigner is painful, I'll go to my motherland

I hope you won't cry after me

I'll go to my motherland, all my troubles will end

We know the melody of this requiem very well from *Look at Ankara's Rock*. A requiem, full of pain and trouble, was deprived of its cultural and historical context and only the melody remained the same as lyrics were rewritten. Cemîla Celîl criticizes Kurds harshly with regard to this matter:¹⁶⁸

Unfortunately, Kurds did not oppose such things. If someone takes something from us, we must catch their hand, stop and ask what are they doing, say that this is our father's, grandfather's property, it's my identity, heritage, culture. We always say "good for you." For example, Armenians have translated a lot of Kurdish songs and play them on the radio as Armenian. They know them now as Armenian songs, because they do not say this and that is a Kurdish song. In the archives they also do not write them as Kurdish songs. The same thing happens in Turkey. Sadly, not just by the Turks, but also Kurdish dengbêjs did this and credited Kurdish songs to Turks. They would definitely never talk about the origin of a song. If a song is translated into another language then certainly it must be stated from which language and culture. I see such ventures as highly questionable. This is theft. Such singers sell their nations, with their own hands they open the door for the occupiers. I don't know what to say. Is it ignorance or lack of understanding or is it complicity?

According to M. Yücel, a researcher, in national literature movement led by Ziya Gökalp, the Kurd was assigned the role of a savage villager while the Turk was a city-dweller. Here, Kurds are seen as "female." How Europe perceives the Turks is how Turks perceive the Kurds.¹⁶⁹ After the establishment of the state of Turkey, such writers as Yakup Kadri, Mithat Cemal Kuntay and Nihal Atsız maintained state ideology and ignored Kurdish existence. Later, in works

¹⁶⁷ Etöz, 2011.

¹⁶⁸ Celil, 2011.

¹⁶⁹ Osmanlı-Türk Romanında Kürt İmgesi (Yücel, 2008).

of Nazım Hikmet, Sait Faik, Yaşar Kemal and Orhan Kemal Kurds started to be presented as humans. Kurdish characters entered cinematography owing to Atif Yılmaz, but in a veiled manner. In 1955, “Dağları Bekleyen Kız” (A girl waiting for the mountains) was the first production of this kind. A novel by Esat Mahmut was adapted for the cinema. It tells a story of a female Kurdish character, Zeynep, who is savagely bad villager. Lieutenant Adnan, however, is a courageous and handsome man. The message was that Turks are good. Nowadays, Kurdish culture continues to be plundered on television. In short, Kurds are not people! They are always objects. These are not empty words.¹⁷⁰

Not only Kurds were subjected to assimilation and cultural genocide. All the peoples of Northern Kurdistan have been subjected to similar policies.

G. SLANG IN ORAL LITERATURE

G.K. Chesterton in his book, “The Defendant,” in 1901 wrote that “slang is a metaphor, metaphor is poetry.” It is constantly being created through broad use by unnamed poets. Alan Dundes in his article titled “Who are the Folk” stated that a group consists of people who share common values. Such a group e.g. a family or a nation come together and produce knowledge according to their peculiarity. Slang is considered to be part of people’s knowledge. Academic studies place slang among other forms of oral literary culture. Metaphors play an important role in the use of slang. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson believe that awareness and experience are at the core of a metaphor. For example, contemporary use of words “time” and “money” is metaphoric. One can “manage time,” “use time,” or “waste time” which are all metaphoric expressions. From this perspective slang is generally used in a metaphoric manner. ¹⁷¹ The use of slang in oral literature of Kurdistan can be seen along Chesterston’s metaphoric interpretation. Social life, nature and climate play the most important role in shaping and creating slang. In Kurdish slang animals’ characteristics are frequently used as tropes. Kurdish lingo conveys criticism. Through animals critical opinion is voiced. To a liar one would say “Go, graze by the river.” “Cut this” would be used to silence an ignorant, blabbing person. “Don’t fart under your tail like a sheep” criticizes a person talking behind one’s back. Slang expressions are related to idioms and proverbs as they are also said in a rhythmic manner. According to the examples collected in the field, slang expressions often employ cleaning metaphor. “First wipe your

¹⁷⁰ Yücel, Türk Sinemasında Kürtler, 2008.

¹⁷¹ Terzioğlu, 2006.

own a*s" is used as criticism and suggestion that one cannot easily get away with their words and actions. It is more commonly used for men. Below are some examples of Kurdish slang:

- 1) *They eat each other out of hunger*
- 2) *Shook his a*s and left¹⁷²*
- 3) *First wipe your own a*s*
- 4) *Don't fart under your tale like a sheep*
- 5) *Go, wipe you're a*s in the stream*
- 6) *Go grazing¹⁷³*
- 7) *The bear played*
- 8) *Throw your sh*t behind the rock*
- 9) *Go, graze by the river*
- 10) *Let's chop*
- 11) *Let's cough*
- 12) *Put you're a*s into cold water¹⁷⁴*
- 13) *You don't even know wipe you're a*s¹⁷⁵*
- 14) *He scattered his sh*t¹⁷⁶*
- 15) *He took the pill*
- 16) *Get lost or see the job by the fountain*
- 17) *Get off you lice*
- 18) *Cut this*
- 19) *When he walks insects fall from his clothes*
- 20) *Don't bray*
- 21) *Ride*
- 22) *Don't be successful*
- 23) *Stupid idiot*
- 24) *Dirty a*s*
- 25) *Drunk of the plains*

172 i.e. did not care [Translator's note].

173 i.e. go f**k yourself [Translator's note].

174 i.e. take it easy [Translator's note].

175 i.e. you're inexperienced/don't know what you're talking about [Translator's note].

176 i.e. he couldn't handle [Translator's note].

Use of slang expressions in oral literature of Kurdistan is related to Kurdish society's sense of humor. It comes through swear words, but they are not meant to insult. When someone swears at their spouse, they do not do this to insult, but to convey love and passion. "Daughter of a donkey's son" is not meant to insult, it contains love. A woman called like that will not be offended, she will respond to her husband with a positive demeanor. In Kurdish society mostly fathers express their love for their sons with slang expressions. So a father addresses his son with love when saying "you donkey's son." This becomes clear in a social context. To extol someone one may say: "Look at him/her, a son/daughter of a donkey, how well he/she can sing!" Swearwords can also be used to convey eroticism, more frequently by men though, to describe women's characters. "Why, am I a woman?" or "I'm gonna eat you" are used mostly by men in and convey erotic meanings.

Slang expressions are rooted in people's features. In some Kurdish chants such words as "gas" or "fart" are used as metaphors. These words are used in many genres of oral literature and even more in daily life. Usually, in a society, using these words ("gas" and "fart") is embarrassing. Also in our interviews, in order to remind the storyteller's different expressions, we would give some examples and the interviewees would both laugh and get embarrassed by our words. They also preferred not to utter these words. One of the chants we said in the field was:

*Two beaked hoopoe
Climbed a tree to poo
Got down the tree to poo
Went to the court, said nothing
Went home and lied.*

Kurdish society, which accepted Islam, considers loud flat uses as immoral and amusing. When something like this happens between people, one would express their discontent. According to Islamic beliefs, audible or not, flat uses interfere with ritual religious ablutions.¹⁷⁷ Majority of Kurdish society is Muslim therefore they know requirements for religious ritual purity. In this case expression of discontent affects social relations. The fact that expressions accepted as slang and therefore as a part of oral literary genre, are known by the society shows that they are in constant use. Since these expressions do not have known authorship their origin is also unknown. Thus, one can infer that

¹⁷⁷ Hanafi, Hanbali and Shafi schools agree that flatuses interfere with ritual religious ablutions (El-müderriş 2013).

some elements of the slang might come from pre-Islamic traditions i.e. from the time before conditions for ritual purity were established. In Moristan,¹⁷⁸ a book series prepared for pre-school education, the following chants were used (among others):

*"Went under a bush of blackberries
Three baskets came with the water
One with berries, one with hair,
The other one with sh*t
I swallowed berries
I combed the hair
I stepped into sh*t"*¹⁷⁹

In 2012 under the auspices of Diyarbakır municipality, a school offering education in Kurdish was opened. Moristan book series are used there at a primary school level. One of the teachers was interviewed for this study to discuss the use of nursery rhymes.¹⁸⁰ She told us how parents responded to above quoted chants with surprise asking: "Why do you teach our children such words? Farting, breaking wind are not appropriate words." Parents refer to social norms and believe to represent the right attitude. On the other hand, such slang words do exist in Kurdish oral culture. There is an element of humor embedded in these expressions too. At the same time they are part of this society and are still in use. To conclude, religious norms and ideas have influenced the society and kept it away from literature.

178 Moristan (volume 2-5, Birgül, 2012).

179 Rêzan Erdoğmuş Cizre.

180 Evin Taşdemir, pre-school teacher, March 2012.

CHAPTER 3

TOWARDS ORAL LITERATURE IN PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

All individuals and groups in a society have the right to education, which is one of the basic individual and collective rights. Protection and exercise of these basic rights is constitutive of a society. Collective social struggle for the right to education is essential. Only theoretical knowledge of or sheer existence of the right to education or its individual exercise is meaningless; implementation of this right is of greater importance. Long resistance of Kurdish society against hegemonic powers and states led to such gains as right to education which has to be fully exercised. Therefore, education in mother tongue shall be introduced as soon as possible. What and how should be taught is a matter of utmost importance. The society is primarily responsible for its education and must have the power to make decisions as to the shape of the educational system.

Pre-school education is said to be the fastest passing period of one's life. In this context, early education is important from the perspective of future success. Pre-school education concerns children aged 0-6 and this is extremely important period. Good quality education in this period of one's life is very beneficial for the future. In the pre-school period speaking and learning abilities develop simultaneously. Children talk about things that interest them. In this period the way they learn a language is very important. Nursery rhymes, riddles, poems, stories and games utilized in the pre-school education develop children's understanding of language, teach them how to learn and socialize. Through these activities a child is able to express itself, develops creativity, has confidence in self and learns causal relations between events.¹⁸¹ As stated above, the most important aspect of pre-school is the language. Learning a language is related to personal growth, understanding individual's self in physical, emotional and social terms. Socialization is the most important element in language development. Culture, traditions, geographical location and social relations influence the language. A child starts to learn the language in the family by repeating and imitating adults. Socialization begins and continues inside the family. Prior to starting formal education, a child has a strong capability of learning a language. A child aged 3-4 develops ability to form sentences. With the start of education, child meets more people and develops

¹⁸¹ Demir, 2011.

socially, expands lexis and syntax. Until that moment the child remains inside the family and speaks its mother tongue. Pre-school education is important for the development of the mother tongue and education in mother tongue is an imperative. Language of education and curriculum must be the language the child uses in its neighborhood, village, group. Teachers and school staff must speak clearly and properly for the formation of child’s pronunciation, structure of the language and conceptual understanding of words. Through stories, poems, riddles, nursery rhymes, songs, games, anecdotes, epigrams and role-plays language is developed and activities utilizing these forms are very important in children’s preparation for primary school. A variety of materials and tools shall be designed to allow children speak their languages. They must be provided with opportunities to speak as a basis for their socialization. When it happens, the child is able to freely express itself, speak properly, establish communication, develop lexis and ability to think and analyze with attention problems of “why and how” emerging from communication.

The use of oral literature in pre-school education

1. Nursery rhymes

Nursery rhymes consist of repetitive words. Some of the rhymes involve a dialogue with another person. They are said in a specific way. In the pre-school activities nursery rhymes must not be too long and the teacher should first alone repeat the rhyme a couple of times and later children should repeat after them. Children love nursery rhymes and it is not appropriate to force them to say or memorize the rhymes.

Knock knock floppy clumsy	One, two, believe even three
Sleepy groom	Farting sound
Sir Mustafa	Crazy friend
Eats a grape	Huge sad blue-eyed
Two black holes, two black snakes	Shi**y mustached
We get along well	Sticky eyed
	My hose

2. Riddle

Riddles draw on both tangible and abstract concepts. In the period of pre-school education riddles with tangible problems are more appropriate for children in terms of their ability to understand. They can more easily compre-

hend and solve riddles containing tangible problems. When told, a riddle has clear, understandable features. In case a child cannot give the answer, they contain clues that allow the child to find the solution. Children above age of 3 start to show interest in riddles. They like to create their own riddles and like to be asked ones too. When they do not find the answer, it is the teacher’s role to help.

It grows in water Has wrinkled fingers Lives both in the water and on the land. (a frog) Found in layers on a tree. (a pomegranate) Wall on one side and the other and a furious one inside. (a tongue)	I've got a thing, a thingy When hit with a stone it doesn't break, When thrown into water it breaks (paper) In a clean room sat 32 disciples. (mouth and teeth)
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3. Poetry

Poetry develops in children tolerance and brings to the fore their aesthetic sense. Poems selected for children must be short and contain easy and understandable words so that they can attract attention. They should be told to children periodically and children must not be forced to memorize poems.

School School is good With friends and buddies With writing and teachers With story of the valley We all love it It's a fountain of knowledge There's fun and laughter School is a beautiful home	Mouse Ah, you naughty mouse Ah, you naughty mouse You hate old bread You hate old bread Ah, you naughty vicious mouse Ah, you naughty vicious mouse You're half way through our saddlebag Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah (...)
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4. Stories

Storytelling is important in children’s education. Through stories children learn to understand national and universal values, expand their imagination,

encounter unknown concepts, develop ability to form sentences and learn to describe things. Recurring chants, dialogues of the characters, idioms, proverbs and songs present in stories contribute to children's language development. Listening to stories increases children's imagination.¹⁸² Teacher may revise the story if it contains words that might present difficulty to the children. She may ask questions pertaining to the story or include the children in storytelling. If teacher's storytelling is accompanied by theatrical gestures and facial expressions, the topic can be better presented to the children. A story told in an interesting way will grasp children's attention and they will not get bored.

(...)

Grandma: I promise you, I won't say anything if you don't eat my chickens. If you eat someone else's chickens, eat, again I won't say anything to you.

Fox: I promise. I won't eat your chickens. But the tiger and lion will eat your chickens.

Grandma: How will the tiger and lion eat my chickens?

Fox: Well, If I'm not on my watch, they'll eat them.

One day the fox was hungry and while passing the tiger and lion told them few things.

Fox: The grandma has two chickens and they give three eggs a day. Let's go and have one. I'm also your friend, your partner. Later I'll tell the grandma that we all ate the chicken.

The fox and the tiger went to steal grandma's chicken. Grandma was asleep. She thought that the fox is somehow on his watch. She wasn't worried. Because they gave each other their word. She didn't know that the fox might betray her. That he would go to the tiger and lion and tell them " Let's go and eat grandma's chickens." Grandma was sleeping snoring loudly, unaware of what was going to happen to her.

Fox: Come! The tiger's coming!

Tiger: Well, I'm afraid of this grandma. If you betray us, she'll kill us.

Tiger was afraid of falling into fox's trap. He was right about that. Because the fox set a trap for the tiger. He made a promise to the grandma and he was not

¹⁸² Ass.Prof. Ali Göçer, 2010.

supposed to eat the chickens. He set a trap for the tiger by the chicken coop. while the tiger was peeing he saw the trap.

The tiger was also smart.

Tiger: Fox!

(...)

INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION

This study was carried out in order to emphasize the importance of children's literary products in children's education. In the course of the research oral literary products of Kurdistan were evaluated within scientific framework. At the same time, this study brings together examples of oral literature of Kurds in Northern Kurdistan. To this day important research has been conducted on oral literature of Kurdistan and as a result thousands of literary products have been interpreted and published. This study contributes our own compilation of works that had previously been collected. On the other hand, it became clear that many works presented here had not been investigated before. Thousands of works are published for the first time. There is need to collect more folkloric products. This study differs from previous folklore studies due to two main principles. Studies of Kurdish oral literature to this day, have been sometimes published in foreign languages and were not easily accessible. Some studies, were kind of compilation of all types of literary products. The result we have achieved through this study is realization of the need to use in education previously collected oral literary products.

Works collected in this study have been organized as materials to be used in pre-school education. Secondly, this study for the first time investigates Kurdish children's oral literature. To this day, there is limited body of research on Kurdish oral literature. This study is a step towards future broader and more comprehensive sociological and socio-psychological studies.

Wealth of Kurdish art has been until now protected in oral form. Years long assimilationist policies targeting oral culture have brought a lot of harm to Kurdish society. In some places the language is no longer spoken and in others culture and traditions have been lost. With every passing day Kurdish children depart further from their own values. Misuse of technological progress is the greatest threat to Kurdish oral culture. Assimilationist policies of the state are coupled today by technological advancement and negatively reflect on Kurdish culture. In the light of these, there is a need to protect the

values, but the biggest and most important matter is education in mother tongue. This study brings to the fore some materials to be used in education in mother tongue.

In the course of this research we have arrived at the conclusion that Zaza dialect has reached a dangerous point. In Dersim – Bingöl region proportion of mother tongue speakers is far smaller than in other regions of Northern Kurdistan. In general, children in these two regions speak Turkish during their daily activities, games and on the streets. Only the elderly speak among themselves Kurdish. Turkish language is the means of intergenerational communication. There is a need to conduct comprehensive research in these two regions and to organize awareness campaigns as to the importance of mother tongue. To this end appropriate policies must be developed. To provide opportunities to learn Kurdish, speaking Kurdish must be encouraged and popularized. Projects to this end must be created.

Cultural transmission still takes place through oral literature. Culture and traditions reach new generations through *dengbêj* and storytellers as well as other forms of oral literature. We have seen ourselves that with the help of oral literary products one can get informed and appreciate cultural characteristics of a society. Therefore, it is possible for oral literary forms to bring to us today past lifestyles and past features of the society. Education in mother tongue is a big step towards formation of Kurdish oral and written literature. Institutions and organizations working on issues related to Kurdish language must work hand in hand with politicians, movie directors, writers and other artists to develop common way and methods. As a result of such efforts awareness and sense of ownership will develop in Kurdish society. Thus struggle for language rights that has lasted for many years will be strengthened and bring about education in mother tongue. Today's circumstances differ from those of the past. Nowadays cinema, theatre, music and literature are intertwined and contribute to the progress.

Territory of Kurdistan has been divided into four parts by state borders (of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran). In Kurdish view the borders have no meaning. Studies carried out by Kurds are concerned with all four parts of Kurdistan. Both political and cultural studies are valid for the whole Kurdistan. Entire Kurdistan is the subject in the cinema, literature, theatre and music.

Oral culture has always been the source for written literature. Children's written literature is designed according to the needs of children. Works prepared

for children must take into account children's satisfaction, enrichment of their imagination and perform educational function. It is an imperative that these works play a role of a game in children's lives. In terms of the language, they must be simple, smooth and easy.

Due to modernity, technological progress as well as assimilationist policies of dominant powers oral culture of Kurdish society is on the brink of disappearance. Protection of Kurdish language from pressure of dominant cultures and widespread use of mother tongue in education are paramount. Organizations and institutions working in the field of language do not meet the needs of Kurdish society in terms of education. Along the education in mother tongue, scientific study of history, linguistics, folklore and oral literature must be carried out. We believe that with this study we have made a small step in this direction and from now on bigger steps will be made. With hope for all the children to study, read and live in their mother tongue...

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